

Internal Directive on the Protection of Children's Rights

Centre for Civil and Human Rights
Hrnčiarska 2/A, 040 01 Košice, Slovakia

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Objectives

The *Centre for Civil and Human Rights* (hereinafter referred to as “the Centre”) is committed to the highest standards of child protection.

This directive defines the obligations, responsibilities, and procedures designed to ensure a safe, dignified, and respectful environment for all children to whom the Centre provides services, particularly Roma children represented by the Centre in court and other proceedings involving discrimination or violations of their rights.

The Centre for Civil and Human Rights applies a **zero-tolerance policy** toward any form of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or inappropriate behaviour toward children.

All forms of violations of children's rights are unacceptable and will be addressed promptly, impartially, and in accordance with this directive and the laws of the Slovak Republic.

1.2 Legal Framework and Standards

This directive is in compliance with:

- International treaties on the rights of the child (e.g. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child);
 - Relevant European legal instruments (e.g. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union);
 - Standards of the European Commission: *Keeping Children Safe: The International Child Safeguarding Standards*.
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1.3 Scope of Application

This directive applies to all employees, volunteers, collaborators, external legal representatives, interns, and any other individuals acting on behalf of the Centre who have direct or indirect contact with children.

2. Definitions

- **Child:** Any person under the age of 18.
 - **Representation:** Legal or other advocacy of the interests of a child, including participation in court or administrative proceedings concerning discrimination, rights violations, etc.
 - **Roma child:** A child who identifies as Roma or is identified as such based on cultural or ethnic origin.
 - **Contact Person / Child Protection Focal Point:** A person designated by the organization to monitor compliance with this directive and serve as the first contact in cases of suspected or reported child abuse or rights violations.
 - **Child abuse / Violation of child rights:** Any form of physical, psychological, or sexual abuse, neglect, discrimination, or other act that threatens the dignity, rights, or well-being of a child.
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3. Principles

- **Safety and Protection:** Children must always be protected from any risk of abuse, discrimination, or violation of rights.
- **Equality and Non-Discrimination:** Special attention is given to the protection of Roma children whose rights are often at risk. The organization commits to ensuring equal access to justice and protection regardless of ethnic origin.
- **Best Interests of the Child:** The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions and decisions concerning children.
- **Respect and Dignity:** Children are individuals with rights. Communication with them and their families must be sensitive to their culture, language, traditions, and identity.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Clear procedures, responsibilities, and mechanisms for reporting, investigation, and accountability for violations of this directive.
- **Right to Privacy:** Personal data and information concerning children must be treated confidentially and protected in a lawful and secure manner.

4. Prevention

4.1 Recruitment and Vetting of Personnel

All employees, volunteers, and external lawyers working with children must undergo background checks (e.g. criminal record extract, verification of previous employment). References and experience in child-related work must be verified.

4.2 Education and Training

All staff and external collaborators must undergo mandatory training on child rights, anti-discrimination law, and protection of Roma children.

Regular refresher sessions, case reflections, and exchange of experience shall be organized.

4.3 Safe Environment

Meetings with children must take place in safe, appropriate settings where isolation is avoided.

Whenever possible, a second person should be present (preferably the child's legal guardian). Clear rules of conduct and ethics in interactions with children apply — respect, non-violence, and appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour.

4.4 Communication

Communication with children and their families shall be accessible, understandable, and culturally sensitive, preferably in their native language.

Children and their legal guardians must be informed about their rights, what to expect (process, timeframes, outcomes), and available complaint mechanisms.

4.5 Code of Ethical Conduct

All staff, associates, and partners of the Centre must observe the following principles in interactions with children:

- Children must never be physically, psychologically, or verbally harmed.
- No inappropriate or offensive language, mockery, or gestures shall be used.
- Personal or intimate relationships with children outside the professional context are prohibited.
- Gifts, money, or personal favours must not be offered without prior authorization from the Centre's management.
- No child may be photographed or recorded without explicit consent from the child (if of sufficient maturity) or their legal guardian.
- All interactions must be grounded in respect, dignity, and equality.

4.6 Child Participation

The Centre supports the active participation of children in decision-making processes that concern them.

Children have the right to express their views in accordance with their age and maturity, and such views must be duly considered.

The organization regularly collects feedback from children regarding service quality and the effectiveness of protection measures.

5. Procedures for Identifying, Reporting and Responding to Violations

5.1 Identification of Suspicion or Report

Every person working with children must remain alert to signs of possible abuse, discrimination, or other serious violations of a child's rights.

Examples of concerning situations include denial of access to education, segregation, racist attacks, psychological pressure, abuse, or neglect.

5.2 Protection of Whistleblowers

The Centre guarantees that any individual who reports suspected violations of child rights will be protected from victimization or discrimination.

Anonymous reporting is permitted.

All reports are taken seriously and investigated in accordance with internal procedures and applicable law.

5.3 Response and Investigation of Complaints

The management of the Centre shall ensure prompt and impartial investigation of all complaints related to violations of children's rights within the scope of its work.

If necessary, the case shall be referred to competent authorities (police, social services, prosecutor's office) in accordance with Slovak law.

If a breach of duty under this directive is confirmed, the Centre shall impose disciplinary measures on the employee concerned or terminate cooperation with external collaborators.

6. Protection of Privacy, Data and Confidentiality

All information relating to a child, case, or legal representation must be kept confidential. Access to sensitive data is restricted to persons who require it for their professional duties. Consent to publish or share any information (including media communication) must be obtained from the child (if capable of giving consent) or their legal guardian, always respecting the child's best interests.

The Centre recognizes that child protection also applies in digital environments.

When working with children online, the following rules apply:

- Do not send private messages to children through personal or unofficial channels.
 - Do not post or share photos, videos, or personal data of children without informed consent.
 - Use secure online communication platforms.
 - Monitor and minimize risks related to data sharing, cyberbullying, or unauthorized access.
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7. Responsibilities and Management

Child Protection Focal Point:

Vanda Durbáková, statutory representative of the Centre, oversees compliance with this directive, receives reports, coordinates responses, and maintains relevant documentation.

Employees / Legal Representatives / Volunteers:

Must become familiar with the contents of this directive at the start of their cooperation or employment and adhere to the obligations contained herein.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Regular evaluation of the implementation of this directive shall be carried out.

Monitoring includes recording the number of reports, complaints, disciplinary cases, and investigation outcomes.

The directive shall be reviewed whenever legislative changes occur, new risks arise, or based on practical experience.

9. Risk Management

The Centre regularly identifies, assesses, and mitigates risks associated with work involving children.

This process includes:

- Conducting regular risk assessments for all activities involving contact with children.
 - Implementing preventive measures to minimize identified risks.
 - Integrating risk management into project and legal service planning.
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10. Partnerships and Cooperation

The Centre ensures that all partners, associates, lawyers, and external service providers who come into contact with children comply with this policy or have equivalent child protection policies of their own.

11. Specific Measures Concerning Roma Children in Legal Proceedings

- **Cultural Awareness:** Training on Roma culture, history, and experiences — including discrimination, segregation, and prejudice — that Roma children and their families face.

- **Access to Justice:** Ensuring legal representation considers the specific needs of Roma children (language barriers, trust, access to information).
 - **Interpretation and Translation:** Providing translation and interpretation when necessary.
 - **Reducing Barriers:** Addressing social and economic obstacles that may hinder the participation of Roma children and their parents.
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12. Final Provisions

This policy enters into force on **1 October 2025**.

All new employees, volunteers, and legal representatives must be familiarized with this policy upon commencement of cooperation or employment.

This directive is publicly available on the organization's website: www.poradna-prava.sk

Note : This is unofficial translation of the Slovak version of the document made by AI