CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

PORAKA NOVA

ABSTRACT

Our organization is committed to ensuring the safety, well-being, and rights of all children. This Child Protection Policy outlines our principles, procedures, and responsibilities in preventing and responding to child abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

About Poraka Nova

PORAKA NOVA is a non-profit organization active since 1984 in the town of Struga, Republic of Macedonia. Its main goal during these years has been the improvement of the quality of life of people with intellectual disability and their families.

The Vision of Poraka Nova is an improved quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

The Mission of Poraka Nova is to work on effective promotion of the rights of people with intellectual disabilities and their families, in a way that all citizens related to the intellectual disability, will have an opportunity to receive adequate support and resources they need.

The Principles on which is based the work of Poraka Nova are Equal opportunities, Transparency, Responsibility, Partnership, Tolerance, Sustainability, Inclusion, Participation.

The Objectives of Poraka Nova for improvement of the quality of life of the people with intellectual disabilities are:

- Respecting the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities;
- Encouraging people with intellectual disabilities to rely on their own strengths and skills;
- Nondiscrimination of the people with intellectual disabilities;
- Autonomy and independence of people with intellectual disabilities in the use of services;
- Economic, social, health and juridical protection of the people with intellectual disabilities;
- Social justice, social integration, and inclusion.

PORAKA NOVA has more than 100 members with disabilities, and more than 450 members without disabilities, coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds and different ethnic groups, considering the important presence of minorities in Struga. Our staff is composed by young high-qualified professionals and it makes use of the participation of local volunteers. PORAKA NOVA offers excellent working conditions and facilities, where the beneficiaries feel very comfortable. The families of PWIDs find tremendous support in our organization, witnessing the improvement of their loved one's quality of life. They are also discharged of providing constant care, contributing to foster their employability. We involve the families in various activities, organize periodically seminars and publish information targeted to the families. Our work and dedication give a long-term impact on the life of people with disabilities, and also on their families' life. Some of our beneficiaries are employed and have a fulfilling social life.

Title of the policy	*Child protection policy*
Author of the policy	*Centre for improvement of the quality of life of the persons with intellectual disability and their families PORAKA NOVA*
Aim	*The procedures described in this policy are committed towards the protection of the children. The aim of this policy is to ensure that Poraka Nova is preventing and reducing any kind of risk that can cause any harm or abuse to the children in the projects and activities organized by the organization.*
To whom is addressed	*Staff of Poraka Nova (employees, representatives, supporters, volunteers)* *Partners involved in our projects* *Consultants, experts and freelancers involved in our projects* *Families of children with and without disabilities* *Children*
Date	*01/02/2024*

Purpose of the document

This policy aims to create a protective environment for children involved in our programs, activities, and services.

The policy applies to all staff, volunteers, representatives, supporters, partners, and anyone associated with our organization.

Introduction

As an organization committed to improve quality of life of people with intellectual disability and their families, our role extends beyond the provision of our activities to include protection of the children with and without disabilities and creating safe environment in all projects and activities that they are involved in. Children with disabilities face unique challenges, and we actively work to ensure their rights are respected.

By prioritizing child protection, we establish a foundation of trust with families, ensuring that they feel secure in our commitment to create a safe activities and space for their children. This trust extends to the community we act, creating a collaborative environment where everyone is dedicated in building safety conditions.

Our dedication to child protection is strengthening our relationships with partners, who recognize the value on creating a protective atmosphere for children with and without disabilities, which is essential for our mutual growth and prosperity. This collective trust is a proof to our dedication to defend the rights and security of children everywhere with any kind of ability.

Our policy is both preventive and responsive. From one side it aims to prevent harm by establishing a protective environment in our activities that avoid potential incidents before they happen. On the other side our policy is also designed to respond effectively and efficiently when incidents do occur in various situations, ensuring that any issues are addressed promptly and with absolute care.

Every child has their own rights, regardless of their abilities or circumstances. These rights include the right to safety, dignity, and well-being, ensuring that each child is afforded the same opportunities for growth and development.

We address a wide spectrum of child protection issues, including:

- Protecting children from violence, neglect, and exploitation.
- Ensuring their emotional and psychological safety.
- Advocating for children with disabilities, recognizing their unique vulnerabilities.

Our commitment aligns with international conventions, including:

Convention on the Rights of the Child: This landmark treaty recognizes children as rights holders. It emphasizes their right to life, education, health, and protection.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: We uphold the rights of children with disabilities, ensuring their inclusion and equal opportunities.

Links of the documents:
Convention on the Rights of the Child https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child
Child protection strategy by UNICEF Child-Protection-Strategy-Summary-2021.pdf (unicef.org)
Convention On The Rights Of Persons With Disabilities Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) | Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD) (un.org)

Child protection is an obligation we have to ensure that our staff, partners, consultants, experts and everyone else that is involved in our projects, families of children with and without disabilities, do not harm the children. This means that none of them can expose children to the risk of harm and any kind of abuse.
The child protection policy refers to all of the actions we take to ensure that children are safe with us during the implementation of our activities from the projects.

The measures that we will take in order to prevent or reduce the chances if any concerns will occur, include a code of conduct, safe procedures of employment, safe employment policy and practice and open communications. Even though with all these measures taken, child protection concerns still may be at risk and in that case if we see that some child is at harmed, treated or its security is compromised, we will take further steps and turn towards authorities for their help and advice for taking more rigorous measures from their side if needed.

The identification of the risks and taking action to address them is essential in our work. As long as we will recognize them, that means they will be prevented. The most important part is the way that we will respond and the measures we will take to respond to any kind of abuse towards the children.

Core values and principles

Poraka Nova recognizes the importance of child safety and we are dedicated to creating a secure environment during implementation of our activities and projects. This policy is our proof that we are willing to take proactive attitude towards child's safety even beyond the scope of our main activities. We believe that every person has a role to play in the collective responsibility of child protection, and we strive to be the example in that regard.

As organization we do not have tolerance towards any form of discrimination, violence, any kind of abuse and exploitation of children and we do not support any behavior that disrespect that. This applies to all our employers, users, volunteers, representatives, as well as partners and they all have to read the policy, accept the basic values and to follow the obligations given by role they have in Poraka Nova.

Our core values towards child protection are considering:

- According to the Law on child protection (Article 11) and according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child is considered a child (Article 1), a child is considered any person up to the age of 18, as well as persons with disabilities physical and mental development until the age of 26.
- Every child is important and all children have equal rights and must never be discriminated, regardless of the skin color or the color of their parents or guardians, gender, gender identity and expression, language, religious affiliation, political or other views, ethnic or social affiliation, property, disability, sexual orientation, civil or other status
- All children have the right to feel free to express themselves, to be save and protected from any form of discrimination and any kind of abuse, like physical, psychological, neglecting injury and exploitation.
- Poraka Nova will inform all staff, partners and collaborators, as well as employees of partner organizations or other entities that have collaboration with, to apply the best possible practice in theirs behavior towards children in both their professional and private lives.

Our principles that are reflecting the core values are:

- **Empowerment** – This principle for children, both with and without disabilities, is centered around recognizing and empowering their strengths and capabilities, ensuring they have the opportunities and real support to participate fully in the society. By creating opportunities through our projects and activities we will provide them and their families with the right tools in order to help them to make right decisions in their lives and to feel fully engaged in the processes.
- **Inclusion** – This principle is a fundamental approach that ensures all children, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, have the same rights and it will be given equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from all our activities and projects.
- **Respect** – By focusing on their inherent dignity and worth, regardless of their ability or disability every child has the right to be treated with respect. We ensure that no matter of the circumstances or challenges that children are facing we are open and responsive to their specific needs and try to provide help in breaking the barriers. By treating every child with respect, we are providing same opportunities for all of them.
- **Advocacy** – Representing and supporting the rights and interests of the children we are promoting inclusive policies and practices that ensure every child has the opportunity to participate fully in the society. We understand and recognize that the rights of all children must be protected and promoted, and by creating activities and projects we will address specific needs, challenges and negative perceptions that children with and without disabilities are facing.
- **Safety** – We are working towards creating a secure environment that promotes child`s well-being and development. Here we put all our experience built up over the years and we will provide the support towards all children`s needs especially those with disabilities in order to understand their vulnerabilities and additional risks they may face. Through our projects and activities, we will educate the families and society about inclusion, accessibility, importance of creating safety measures in the environment, and we will raise awareness about understanding the barriers they are facing, the boundaries they are limited to, and the needed help.
- **Responsibility** – This principle is a duty of the whole society to make sure that all children have the same opportunities regardless of their abilities. We are all having the responsibilities to create inclusive approach that is appropriate and responsive to any kind of needs that children have.
- **Continuous improvement** – we are supporting the idea that all children regardless of their abilities should have equal opportunities, to develop their capacities and to be used their full potential. We will make sure that this document and these principles will not be static and that they will evolve by the time to reflect the best interests of the children.

The difference between child protection and respecting children's rights

Child protection and respecting children's rights are two fundamental aspects of child well-being, yet they serve distinct purposes. The aspect of child well-being is crucial as it ensures that children are kept safe from harm and that their basic needs for security are met.

Child protection is primarily concerned with protecting the children from any harm, abuse, and exploitation. It involves proactive measures and interventions to ensure a child's immediate safety and security.
Respecting children's rights is recognizing and reassuring the broader range of rights that children have as mentioned in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This includes not only the right to be protected from harm but also the right to education, healthcare, freedom of expression, and participation in decisions that are affecting their lives.

While child protection is an urgent response to prevent and address direct threats to a child's well-being, respecting children's rights is a unified approach that empowers children and respects their dignity as individuals with their own voices and needs. Together, they form a comprehensive approach to creating a supportive and enabling environment for all children to develop.

This all will be presented and respected by all people involved in all stages of our projects and activities, starting from project planning, organization and implementation up to the purchases of the needed materials and use of services in order to protect the children from any kind of abuse or treat.

Creating programs and projects that are safe for children

In our surrounding we are creating projects and activities that are safe for all children. Every activity in our projects and programs it is created to be free from harm for every child and it is developed to support their growth. This also applies to all people that will be included in the projects:

- All full time or part time employees in our organization
- Active representatives, volunteers, supporters and participants in our everyday activities.
- Freelancers, partners, consultants and experts involved in our projects
- Family members that involved in our activities
- Children with and without disabilities that will be involved in the activities of the projects
- Public institutions that will be supporting our work and will help us when threats will occur
- All people that will be occasionally visit our offices

We are dedicated to improve our safety measures and creating secure environment for all children. We will be continuously evaluating and monitoring the process and progress of the policy to incorporate with the on-going situations.

Prevention and protection

In Poraka Nova we are deeply recognizing the impact that we are making on the lives of young people through our activities and projects created in our programs. We are motivated to continue that work while keep the highest standards of child protection and prevention beyond our direct interaction with them, ensuring a safe and supportive environment at all times where they can build their progress full of possibilities and opportunities.

We are dedicated in our devotion to follow ethical code of conduct, which is essential for our activities. We are carefully creating activities and projects that are designed and implemented in a manner that are preventing any potential harm to children. Our approach is proactive and preventive, rather than reactive, making the well-being a priority of the children that are involved in our activities.

In all our projects we are actively creating activities for raising awareness and with this we are pointing out the responsibilities within our organization and the broader community. We believe that the protection of children is not merely an individual responsibility but a collective one.

The role of the staff in Poraka Nova in securing protection of the children

The strict practices of child protection are applying to all staff of Poraka Nova and all future candidates that are willing to work and support our work in our organization. All staff will be learning to understand the importance of child protection policy and will be actively involved in the policy reviews in the future. The staff must be aware of the potential risk within activities and projects that our organization will be implementing and they need to create a safety measure in order to avoid the risks.

They need to recognize any signs of abuse and understand the appropriate steps to take concerning child safety. They must maintain professional boundaries with children at all times. Any form of inappropriate behavior towards children is unacceptable and will be addressed with disciplinary procedures. The staff must respect the confidentiality and privacy of children and their families. Information regarding child protection concerns or reports should only be shared with authorized personnel. Employees should promote an environment that supports child protection. This includes engaging in positive interactions with children and contributing to an atmosphere of care and respect.

Consent

We are especially careful when organizing events within our activities and projects that require visits of photographers, journalists or visitors from outside our organization. We require signed consent from parents or legal guardians to ensure that all actions taken by our organization align with the best interests of the children and comply with legal and ethical standards. The signed consent covers all activities, services, and programs provided by our organization, including but not limited to educational, recreational, and support services.

Parents or legal guardians are fully informed about the nature and extent of the activities, services, and programs that their child will be participating in. The information provided is including the potential risks benefits, and the measures taken to ensure safety, and the rights of all children with and without disabilities.
The consent is given voluntarily, without any form of pressure or persuasion, with understanding that can be withdrawn at any time.

In situations where a child is at significant risk of harm, and obtaining consent is not possible or may increase the risk, our organization will take the necessary actions without consent to protect the child, following legal mandates and procedures.

Parents or legal guardians will be notified of any changes to the programs or policies that may affect the consent they have provided.

Policy implementation and monitoring

Implementation of the child protection policy and its monitoring are important steps that will ensure effective realization of the policy and achieving the principles.
The policy is integrated in all our program activities and projects. This includes incorporating child protection measures in implementation plans, and monitoring is for following the consistent application across all initiatives.
Any reports for incidents or concerns related to child protection will be documented, and addressed promptly in accordance with relevant procedures. Any new patterns or trends in reported incidents will be added in policy revisions along with preventive measures.
Feedback from staff and outside supporters and participants in our activities will be incorporated promptly into the monitoring process. This feedback will help us to identify challenges, gaps, and areas of improvement in policy implementation.
Transparency and accountability are important for effective implementation of the child protection policy. Regular reporting on policy implementation and monitoring will be provided to staff responsible for the revision of the policy.

With quality implementation and monitoring of our child protection policy, we demonstrate our consistent commitment to creating a safe and protective environment for children involved in our activities and projects.

Responsible for the policy

The executive director and program coordinators are responsible for successful implementation and promptly revision of the policy.
The marketing manager is responsible for the monitoring of the policy.