

Melissa Network

Child Safeguarding Policy

2024



Applicable to: All Melissa Network Staff, Volunteers and Partners

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Melissa Network Child Safeguarding Policy

1. Introduction - Child safeguarding

Melissa Network, acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and is committed to providing guidance and overarching principles to those who represent us as staff, members and volunteers, to guide our approach to child protection and safeguarding.

The policy recognizes that the welfare and interests of children are paramount in all circumstances. It aims to ensure that regardless of age, ability or disability, ethnicity, faith, gender, sexuality and culture, socio-economic background of all children, so as:

- To have a positive and enjoyable experience at the Child Friendly Space (CFS) of Melissa Network in a safe and child-centered environment
- And to be protected from abuse while participating in the various activities taking place at Melissa

As part of our safeguarding policy Melissa Network will:

- Promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- Ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognize, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people
- Ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern
- Ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored
- Ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation

The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone employed, working on a voluntary basis or in partnership with Melissa Network. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organization.

All Melissa Network staff, volunteers, and partners who work with children must sign up and abide by the Melissa Network Child Safeguarding Policy.

Melissa Network's principles are related to protection of the children and are based on UN's Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) and reflect the rights of children to protection



from abuse and exploitation as outlined in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989).

Scope

An overall approach to child safeguarding is rooted in understanding the risks to children from the organisation, and addressing those risks with measures that create a child-safe environment. Acknowledging risks and implementing measures to address them is fundamental to Melissa Network strategies and governance. The more this is recognized, the more risks can be prevented.

This policy is reviewed, endorsed and approved by the General Assembly every three years, or when legislation changes.

2. Definitions

Child Abuse: Anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood. The main categories of Child Abuse are:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Neglect or Negligent Treatment
- Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation
- Bullying

2.1.1. Physical Abuse: The use of physical force that causes actual or likely physical injury or suffering.

2.1.2. Emotional abuse: Any humiliating or degrading treatment such as bad name calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement and isolation.

2.1.3. Neglect/Negligent Treatment: Persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs; failing to prevent harm; failing to ensure adequate supervision; or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

2.1.4. Sexual Abuse: All forms of sexual violence. Child sexual abuse also may include indecent touching or exposure, using sexually explicit language towards a child and showing children pornographic material. Sexual Exploitation: Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. This includes exchange of assistance due to children benefiting from Melissa Network programming. The sexual exploitation of a child who is under the age of consent is child sexual abuse and a criminal offense.

2.1.5. Bullying may be defined as deliberately hurtful behavior, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many



forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name calling) and emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group).

3. Prevention

Melissa Network is committed to conducting its programs and operations in a manner that is safe for the children it serves and helping protect the children with whom Melissa Network is in contact. All Melissa Network representatives are explicitly prohibited from engaging in any activity that may result in any kind of child abuse.

In addition, it is Melissa Network's policy to create and proactively maintain an environment that aims to prevent and deter any actions and omissions, whether deliberate or inadvertent, that place children at the risk of any kind of child abuse.

Melissa will ensure that this document is shared with the people, employees and non employees that interact with children and ensure that they are fully aware of the principles and policies, regarding children's safeguarding. We will achieve the outcome by having in place:

- Safe organizational ethos
- Safe environment
- Safe processes for working with service users
- Safe collection and use of information, and ways of communicating
- Safe recruitment procedures

4. Safe recruitment

Melissa Network child safeguarding is also reflected in the recruitment procedure, which includes the following pre-employment checks in the recruitment process:

- recruit staff and volunteers with regard to their suitability for work with children
- provide staff and volunteers with guidance and training in their safeguarding role, and ensure they have access to our policies and procedures
- make sure everyone has access to advice on safeguarding at all times in the course of their work
- be clear with everyone what their individual role and responsibility is in safeguarding
- support staff and volunteers to carry out their job with appropriate supervision

All members of staff will receive training on child safeguarding when they join the organization, which includes an introduction to the organization's child safeguarding procedures and learning on how to recognize and respond to concerns about child abuse.



5. Raising awareness among community

Information on the Child Safeguarding Policy will be translated in languages spoken by the participants at Melissa Network and posted in visible places so they will know who to address. Furthermore, Melissa Network will establish a complaints procedure for children, families and communities. Melissa Network will:

- Ensure everybody knows who has responsibility for the care of a child in any program or project and have a record of their contact details.
- Make sure that staff are easily identifiable when at work, for example by wearing a T shirt or badge.
- Obtain parental or primary caregiver consent for children's participation in activities whenever possible.
- Discuss with children what makes them feel safe and unsafe and agree on ways for children to complain if they have a concern about themselves or their friends.
- Devise a process for ensuring children are consulted and listened to, to ensure their voices are heard and that their views inform and influence the development of safeguarding measures in the organization.

6. Core principles

All Melissa Network staff, volunteers, and partners who work with children must:

- Listen to and respect children, empower them and let them participate in planning and delivering activities as much as possible
- Be aware of situations which may present risks for children and take appropriate actions
- Consider the physical appearance at work. Dressing must be appropriately for the task undertaken
- Contribute to ensure a sense of accountability amongst staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behavior does not go unchallenged
- Observe confidentiality and not talk about any situations of actual or suspected abuse that occurs except in accordance with this policy. This is necessary to protect the privacy of those involved
- Melissa Network has the duty to manage sensitive information in a manner that is respectful, professional and that complies with the applicable law.
- Use appropriate terminology according to the age and maturity level of the child

All Melissa Network staff, volunteers, and partners who work with children must not:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse children
- Act in ways meant to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children
- Show differential treatment, or favor particular children to the exclusion of others

- Use language or make suggestions which are inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- Spend excessive time alone with children away from others without the consent of their mother
- Develop relationships with children which could in any way be seen as exploitative or abusive
- Develop intimate sexual relationships with children
- Pay for sexual services, of any kind, at any time, with anyone under the age of 18 years old, even if the age of sexual consent in the country is under 18 years
- Expose children to pornographic materials in electronic or any other form
- Permit children to take part in activities that are illegal, unsafe or abusive
- Whilst working:
 - take or condone the taking of illegal drugs
 - drink alcohol when with children (or prior to contact)
- Invite, or allow, a child you have met through work into your home
- Offer to transport a child alone in a car
- Use personal email accounts, social networking sites, mobile phones or other means of communication to contact children. Always use business email accounts and copy in parents when sending out communication to children.
- Take photos of children participating in Melissa Network activities without getting consent from the child/ guardian. Consent always needs to be given in writing by the parent/carer.
- Let allegations go unreported, including any made against them
- Agree to keep any information relating to the abuse of a child confidential.
- Not remain at any time, alone with a child in a room (two adult rule)
- Use children as translators/interpreters in sessions with their parents

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. The principle is that staff should avoid action or behavior which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behavior.

7. Reporting procedures and Guidelines

It is Melissa Network's policy to ensure compliance with Greek laws and local child welfare and protection legislation and international standards, affording protection for children.

Any action to be taken will be determined by the urgency and seriousness of the circumstances.

The first step of any reported incident is to ensure the safety of the child(ren) concerned.

Where there are serious concerns to the child's safety, act immediately. Delaying the process may place the child at further risk.



For each concern or incident, a Child Safeguarding Concern Report Form must be filled out by the relevant member of staff or volunteer (see Appendix 1) and immediately reported to the Child Protection Focal Person (CPF). These records will be stored securely with access limited to the CPF; a report must be made to the Executive Committee by the CPF as up to 24 hours depending on the level of emergency. For the above mentioned issues all members of staff, volunteers and partners will receive information in the first month after the beginning of their contract with the organization and participate in continuous training provided by the organization or other relevant actors accordingly and systematically.

No person who makes a report in good faith will be subject to retaliation. A person may report on an anonymous basis although that may impede the CPF's ability to thoroughly investigate the allegations. The Executive Director may inform appropriate colleagues during the investigation. In its goal of engaging in a thorough investigation, Melissa Network may, however, be required to disclose the allegations or result of the investigation to the authorities.

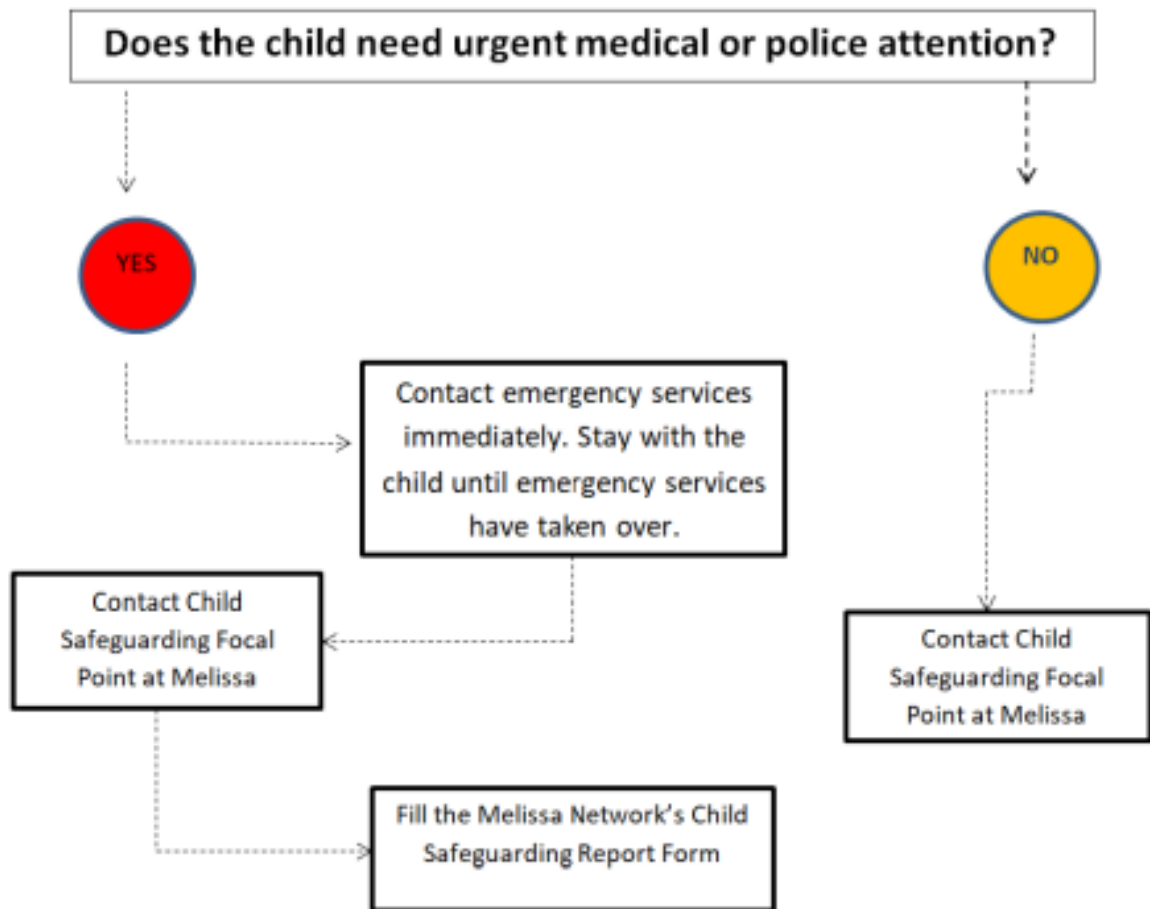
Reactive monitoring will take place after any incident occurred or concerns have been raised in order to review procedures and assess how changes could be made to avoid repetition.

Focus groups will take place every three years with staff, volunteers and relevant key partners to assess whether the safeguards as outlined in this document are effective in keeping children safe. The Child Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed and receive formal approval by the General Assembly every three years.

Cases in which you must contact the Child Protection Focal Point:

1. Did you witness child abuse?
Yes
No
2. Do you suspect someone of child abuse?
Yes
No
3. Has someone alleged abuse of a child?
Yes
No
4. Has someone disclosed abuse of a child to you?
Yes
No

If you answered yes to any of the above, please follow the reporting framework below:



Step 1. The CPF receives a report for child abuse

Step 2. The CPF informs the Executive Committee

Step 3. The CPF arranges a meeting with the social worker, lawyer and psychologist of Melissa network.

Step 4. Plan of action for intervention according to the current legislation for the protection of children and also the available services for such issues.

Step 5. Continuous feedback and follow-up of the actions taken

Step 6. Evaluate the overall situation

Step 7. Case closed. Lessons learnt.

In any other urgent case that a person/a child is in immediate medical risk everybody from the staff may call an ambulance (Emergency phone number/Ambulance: 166).

8. Roles and Responsibilities of Child Safeguarding Focal Point

The role of the Child Protection Focal Point is to ensure that the child safeguarding policy is upheld in a manner that is described at this document. She or he is the main recipient regarding issues of policy violations and reports. The Focal Point is assigned by the Executive Director and must ensure that:

- Child protection informative sessions and trainings are held and that attendance lists are kept and updated.
- Supervisors are aware if an employee has not yet participated in an informative session or training, regarding child safeguarding.
- Everybody has unhindered and confidential access to reporting mechanisms regarding child safety issues and safeguard policy violations, while ensuring that all credible allegations are logged and shared with the Director.
- That the incident report forms submitted are logged and that all credible allegations are shared with the Executive Director.

The employees and volunteers will be informed about the person who undertakes the role of a Child Protection Focal Point (CPF) in the organization with the signing of their contract and Child Safeguarding Policies document. If an investigation is to be made, then, the Executive Director, the Executive Committee, and Melissa Network social worker and lawyer will support the process.



Annex 1: Melissa Network's Child Safeguarding Report Form

Please complete this form if you have knowledge that a child might be at risk of harm or to report an accident or incident involving a child or group of children. Please send the completed form to the Melissa Network Focal Point as soon as possible: it should be written and signed only by you and handled with confidentiality.

1. Your contact details

Your name: _____

Your job title: _____

Nature of your contact with the child: _____

Contact details:

Tel: _____ Email: _____

2. About the child

Child's name: _____

Child's gender: _____

Child's age: _____

Child's address: _____

Child's parents/guardians: _____

Has any treatment been given to the child?

Treatment given by _____

Was the child taken to hospital? (please include further details)

3. Details of the concern or incident

Please include the date, time and location of the alleged incident below.

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____



Please, detail what happened including anything that the child/children or another person said to you and your response. Please, specify if any other children/people were involved in the alleged incident and if any other children were/are at risk of harm.

Please, include the actions you took and whether the incident was observed by you, suspected or disclosed by someone else. If the concern was shared by someone else, please include who and their relation to the child.

Your signature: _____

Date: _____

If further discussion/interviews have taken place to determine the cause of the incident or accident, please attach relevant witness reports or statements in a separate document.



Annex 2: Declaration for Staff and Volunteers of Melissa Network

To be appended to a contract of employment or to be signed by the volunteer:

I have read and understood Melissa Network's Child Safeguarding Policy and accompanying Procedures and Guidance.

I agree to abide by Melissa Network's Child Safeguarding Policy.

I also declare that I have disclosed to Melissa Network any issue which could give rise to any child protection concern — real or perceived — regarding my suitability for employment or consultancy.

I confirm that I have no criminal prosecutions pending, nor have I been previously convicted of any offence involving inappropriate conduct with children.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Annex 3: Guidelines for using image of children

Images and stories about children, families and their communities, is essential material of advocacy and reporting, in order to promote the Organization's work and engage donors and supporters. It is essential to minimize the risk of inappropriate use of information, stories and visual images (photographs, video or social media) of children.

- Images of children must not show them in a state of undress or in inappropriate poses.
- Details attached to images and included in stories must not allow that child to be traced to his or her home or community.
- Geotagging of images should be disabled when taking photographs. Images or stories do not reveal the identity or location of the child;
- The photographer/journalist/interpreter who interacts with children must have been properly vetted and reference checked.
- They always must have been given permission by children and their parents/carers to take their image and use their information.
- Images depicting children at Melissa Network are not used on Melissa Network staff's personal social media accounts.
- Where photographs are being taken at a planned event, as far as possible individuals should be told in advance that cameras will be used and how the photos will be used in order that they can opt out of the event or notify organisers that they do not wish to be featured in any photographs.

References:

1. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/standards_child_protection_kcsc_en_1.pdf
https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/kcs_developing_10.14.pdf
2. http://oakfnd.org/assets/child-safeguarding-policy_final.pdf
3. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/standards_child_protection_kcsc_en_1.pdf
4. http://www.lm.gov.lv/upload/prezentacija2/w2_kcs_-_alex_dressler.pdf

The said document has last been reviewed on 18 December 2024 by Melissa Network's Child Protection Focal Point (CPF), Deborah Valencia.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "D Valencia", written on a light blue background.

Date: December 2024