

A decorative graphic on the right side of the page. It features three overlapping circles of varying sizes, each composed of concentric rings in shades of blue. Two thin, light blue lines intersect at the top right and extend downwards, framing the circles. The circles are positioned in the upper right, middle right, and bottom right areas of the page.

SOCIAL SERVICES

**CHILD PROTECTION
POLICY**

Vision

A harmonious society with empowered individuals and families, enjoying and contributing to a high quality of life.

Mission

Promote and ensure social functioning, wellbeing and self reliance of individuals and families and to integrate marginalised groups.

Introduction

The Seychelles government fully recognises its responsibilities for the protection of children.

Bearing in mind that “the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care”, Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child decreed that State Parties “shall take all appropriate measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse”.

Child abuse occurs to children of both sexes, at all ages and in all cultures, religions, social class and both to children with and without disabilities. It is the duty of all agencies concerned with the issue to work together with a common goal to prevent abuse and protect children.

This policy sets forth the principles, values and beliefs that are adhere to in the fight to protect children.

Main elements of the Policy

- Raise awareness at all levels on child protection matters.
- Provide children with skills to protect themselves and stay safe from abuse.
- Support children who have been abused through effective intervention plans.
- Respond effectively to any concern of abuse.

Principles of child protection

The welfare of the child is the paramount consideration.

- Wherever possible, children should be brought up and cared for by their own families.
- Parents of children in need should be helped to bring up their children.
- Help should be:
 - provided in a spirit of partnership.
 - responsive to any special needs created by any disability.
 - drawn from effective collaboration between different agencies.
- Children and young people should be consulted and kept informed about what is to happen to them.
- Parents have the prime responsibility for the care and protection of their children.
- Time is a crucial element in child care and there should be no undue delay.
- Children's welfare must be protected by prompt, positive and pro-active attention.
- Issues of confidentiality and access to records need to be addressed by all agencies.

- Registers and records must be accurately maintained and kept up to date.
- Cooperation between organisations, departments and individuals is essential to promote effective communication.
- Patterns of family life vary and there is no one perfect way to bring up children. Good parenting involves caring for children's needs, showing them warmth and love and providing the stimulation needed for their development, within a stable environment where they experience consistent guidance and boundaries.
Parents must be able to make sure that their children grow up, cared for and safe from harm.
They have to promote their children's health and development and help them to achieve their full potential.
- Parents themselves require support and there are both statutory and voluntary services available to assist them.
- All work with children and families should retain a clear focus on the welfare of the child.
Safeguarding children's well-being and protecting them from significant harm depends crucially upon effective information sharing, collaboration and understanding between agencies.
Awareness and appreciation of the role of other agencies are vital for effective collaboration.

Factors for consideration

- Identification of child abuse may be difficult. It normally requires both social and medical assessment.
- Previous suspicious or a previous record of abuse or a history of multi-generational abuse are significant indicators of current and future actions and must be taken into account.

- Always listen to the child and take their views into account – pay particular attention to any spontaneous statement. In the case of children without speech, or with limited language, pay attention to their signing or other means of expression, including behaviour and spontaneous play.
- Any delay in seeking medical assistance – or indeed no medical assistance sought at all – could be an indicator of abuse.
- Beware if explanation of an “accident” is vague, lacking detail, inconsistent with the injury or varies with each telling.
- Take note of inappropriate responses from parent or carers.
- Observe the child’s interaction with the parents – particularly wariness or fear of “frozen watchfulness” i.e. persistent anxious regard of an adult by a baby or young child.
- Any history or patterns of unexplained injury/illness requires the most careful scrutiny. (The fact that parent/carer appears to be highly attentive and concerned should not divert attention from the assessment of risk).
- Beware if the injury is inconsistent with the child’s development and mobility.
- Give particular attention to domestic violence cases for indicators of child abuse.

Primary law governing the protection of children:

Children Act – (Act 16 of 1982).

This Act safeguards the wellbeing and welfare of children. The main Sections are listed as follows:

- Duty of maintenance
- Voluntary care and assumption of parental rights
- Foster care
- Adoption
- Offences against children
- Compulsory care
- Juvenile Courts
- Family Tribunal

Values

- Respect at all times for service users
- Accept him\her for himself\herself
- Uphold his\her right to self-determination
- Confidentiality
- Not to condemn him\her
- Belief in the human capacity for change, growth and betterment

Our Commitment to protect children

- Child abuse is not acceptable and our commitment is to protect children.
- All children have equal rights to be protected from abuse.
- Child abuse involves the abuse of children's rights.
- Promote and uphold children's rights (as portrayed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).
- Listen to and take into consideration children's wishes. Take seriously any concerns raised.
- Work in partnership with children for their safety.

Code of Conduct

The existing Code of Ethics for Social Work guides the practice of those undertaking work in this field.

Best practice is outlined, added to professional conduct.

Ethical principles, practice and responsibilities, core values and standard of care are addressed and must be observed.

Conclusion

The State takes the protection of children very seriously and has put in place services to assist them, as the child's safety and happiness are paramount. The State seeks to create a conducive, enabling environment, free from all kinds of abuse.

As rightly said by the former President "Children will be children and adults are only really adults when they understand and love them and provide for them.

A nation can only survive and prosper if it does everything possible to invest in its own children".

President France Albert Rene
Seychelles, 1989.