



ASSOCIATION FOR THE SOCIAL SUPPORT OF YOUTH

**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUTH
POLICY PROCEDURES**

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Applicable to all ARSIS' offices and Infrastructures

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PREAMBLE

“ARSIS – Association for the Social Support of Youth” is a Non Governmental Organization, specializing in the social support of children and youth and in the advocacy of their rights. It was established in 1992 as a non-profit organization with nationwide scope, following to the Greek civil code provisions (official statute no 17904/16.10.1992). It is based in Athens (headquarters) and it has branch offices throughout the Greek periphery (i.e. Thessaloniki, Volos, Alexandroupoli, Kozani, Ioannina).

The current document is issued in Athens – Headquarters and it is officially and duly approved by ARSIS administrative council in order to be implemented by ARSIS Headquarters, all Offices and infrastructures.

This Policy applies to and binds all directors, managers, staff, consultants, volunteers, internship students and partners of ARSIS in any situation where they are involved in ARSIS’s function and works.

A statement is signed by all the aforementioned persons before engaging in any activity of ARSIS, confirming that they have been made fully aware of, understand, agree and follow the contents of, the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

INTRODUCTION: SCOPE AND PRINCIPLES

A. ARSIS' aims and mission

ARSIS' mission is to take actions for the prevention of children and youth exclusion. In this framework, ARSIS develops new methodologies and support tools, organizes and participates in cooperative networks, cooperates with public and private services and develops advocacy and proposals for the social policy concerning children and youth.

Its function, services and works are primarily based on the respect of equality, solidarity and democratic values.

ARSIS activities are implemented on local, national and transnational level and they are developed through the cooperation with public and private stakeholders and networks.

ARSIS offers its services to children and young individuals who live under conditions of poverty, neglect, victimization, conflict, disapproval, exploitation, isolation and racism. It also offers special services to those who are institutionalized and to those who are deprived of family environment.

ARSIS services mainly include psychological, legal, social, educational and employment support, housing and food services, material support, social, educational and recreational activities.

B. The Scope of the Policy

The scope of this document is to set out ARSIS'S Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures in conjunction with ARSIS Statute and statutory purposes.

By stating this policy and procedures ARSIS:

- Recognizes the right of every individual to stay safe
- Aims to ensure that the organization undertakes its responsibilities with regard to protection of children and youth and will respond to concerns appropriately.
- Frames the principles and procedures for the support of the staff, partners, volunteers in their practices and clarifies the organization's expectations; meaning that the actions of any adult in the context of the work carried out by the organization are transparent and safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people. Therefore, this policy is to make sure that procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities shall be followed.

- Promotes good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of ARSIS and to allow staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

C. Principles of the Policy

This document is written in accordance with the national and international legislation and norms concerning children and youth rights, safety and support.

Main principles upon which the Safeguarding Policy is based:

- The welfare of children, youth and their families will always be paramount and it will be promoted
- The rights, wishes and feelings of children, young people and their families will be respected and listened to
- The respect of children and youth rights by staff with designated authority, partners, consultants and volunteers, at all times, during and outside ARSIS works and tasks; emphasizing on the core principle that children are not subjected to any form of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual and neglect) and are equally treated and protected
- Specifically, the people in positions of responsibility within the organization will work in accordance with the interests of children, vulnerable adults and young people and follow the policy outlined below

D. Definitions

- Safeguarding is about embedding practices throughout the organisation to ensure the protection of children and youth, vulnerable adults wherever possible. In contrast, child and adult protection is about responding to circumstances that arise.
- Abuse is perceived according to the meaning of the term “abuse” as it is outlined in the greek legal framework and jurisprudence as well as in the relevant international norms. It may take various forms, including the following: Physical abuse, Sexual abuse, Emotional abuse, Bullying, Neglect, Financial (or material) abuse
- A child is under the age of 18 (as defined in the United Nations convention on the Rights of a Child).
- Youth are those belonging to the age group 15 to 25 years (in line with main provisions of Greek legislation)

PART 1. POLICY'S IMPLEMENTATION AND PROCEDURES

1. Implementation of inked Policies and Procedures towards the realization of the Safeguarding Policy

The scope of this Safeguarding Policy is broad ranging and in practice, it will be implemented via a range of policies and procedures within the organisation.

These include:

1.1. Safe recruitment policy

ARSIS ensures safe recruitment through the following processes:

- Recruitment adverts or application details shall state that the-‘recruitment is done in line with safe recruitment practices.’
- Definition of tasks and clear specifications of roles containing core, competency concerning child and youth protection
- Shortlisting through formal application process, that shall be based on criteria set in accordance with the job/role's specifications, required qualifications and the present Policy
- Interviews are conducted according to equal opportunity principles and interview questions are based on the relevant job description and person specification
- A written declaration shall be provided where the shortlisted candidates will declare that they have no criminal records regarding an offence towards a child and towards specific crimes (see Annex 1)
- Formal job offers are made after checks for suitability in line with this Policy and in conjunction with job's specifications. Therefore any relative document and generally any necessary information may be requested, provided that it is absolutely necessary for the certain purpose, its use will be strictly limited within this purpose and it is in line with the privacy and data protection legislative principles
- Specifically for Shelters for Unaccompanied Children it is necessary for the employees to provide a health certificate according to Law

1.2. Service delivery contracting and sub-contracting policy issues

Partnerships with individuals or other institutions (contracting and sub-contracting) shall not be in contrast with the scope and principles of this Policy and there will be a systematic checking towards this

Contracts and memorandums of agreement for partnership delivery work will include clear minimum requirements, arrangements for safeguarding and non compliance procedures

1.3. Other policies linked with the Safeguarding Policy, including issues of:

- Whistleblowing–ability to *inform* on other staff/ practices within the organization
- Grievance and *disciplinary procedures* – to address breaches of procedures/ policies
- *Health and Safety policy*, including lone working procedures, mitigating risk to staff and clients
- *Equal Opportunities policy* – ensuring safeguarding procedures are in line with this policy, in particular around discriminatory abuse and ensuring that the safeguarding policy and procedures are not discriminatory
- *Data protection* (how records are stored and access to those records)
- *Staff training*

1.4. Special focus on communications, training and support

ARSIS develops effective induction, communications and support mechanisms concerning all the staff (permanent staff, partners, volunteers) towards the implementation of Safeguarding Policy.

Induction includes:

- Discussion about the Safeguarding Policy and confirmation of reading and understanding it. A relevant statement shall be ensured, referring to the fact that the concerned person has been made fully aware of, and understand the contents of, the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. Within the latter discussion the other relevant policies – as listed above p.2.1 – shall be included.
- Clear information and guidance of all staff (including partners and volunteers) so as to ensure familiarity with reporting processes, the hierarchical roles (managers etc and who acts in their absence)
- Initial training on safe working practices, on child and youth protection with a special focus on those belonging in vulnerable groups.

Training includes:

Apart from the initial training, systematic and continuous (refresh) training shall be provided.

The training shall be based on certain criteria concerning the appropriate method of training and the appropriate selection of the trainer (internal or external trainer).

The latter criteria and the implementation of the training shall be in line with

- The assessment of the (expressed) staff's and volunteers' needs.
- The assessment of the (expressed) beneficiaries needs
- The goals and works included in a certain task/job position/project etc

Communications mechanism:

Communications and discussions mechanisms are necessary for the effective dissemination and implementation of the Safeguarding Policy within the organization.

Meetings, regularly and occasionally organized, on the basis of a clear agenda are the most typical form for the development of a communication mechanism.

Depending on the case the meetings are:

- One to one meetings
- Team meetings
- Senior management meetings
- Plenary meetings
- Board meetings

Aspects to be considered within this mechanism are:

- Inclusion of all staff
- Inclusion of volunteers and beneficiaries
- Encouraging open discussion and effective participation of all participants
- Open and flexible process for the establishment of agenda issues
- Clear and coordinated discussion process based on equality principles and mutual respect

Staff and Volunteers' support includes:

The need for the support of all the staff (permanent, temporary, external partners) and volunteers is based on the recognition of the fact that they may be involved in situations where there is additional stress, risk or actual harm. Support mechanisms typically include:

- Constant support provided through the communications mechanisms and training (as prescribed above)
- Access to appropriate special counseling in special cases when needed
- Immediate and proper access to the management and board team

1.5. Professional boundaries and mandatory Code of Conduct

Professional boundaries are established to safeguard the professional integrity, the correct detachment and the proper relationship between a support worker and a beneficiary, and they are based on a mandatory code of conduct.

The following boundaries and rules apply to and bind all directors, managers, consultants, designated staff (permanent staff, contractors, external partners) and volunteers and internship students and dictate their duty to never ignore or omit to report any concern, suspected violation or violation of the current safeguarding policy principles and arrangements:

- Treat every child and youth equally and respectfully, without any form of discrimination, racist, xenophobic behavior and approaching them with positive, friendly and non-violent ways, with respect of their personal and cultural identity in line with the principles stated in the current Policy (see Introduction point C)
- Respect of the children's and young adults right to be heard and to participate in the procedures and decisions that concern them, inform, encourage and empower them towards the claiming and realization of their rights.
- Respect of the principles of trust, confidentiality and personal data protection. In conjunction with these principles, a safe information sharing process among the competent involved professionals/ stakeholders shall be followed. It is noted that any information, data, photo concerning the beneficiary's personality and story shall be published only under his/her explicitly given permission, and provided that he/she is not exposed to any danger or risk of stigmatization. Special care shall be taking concerning the children cases (see below).
- It is prohibited to:
 - Any kind of sexual relationship with persons bellow 18 years old. You will never provoke, harass or degrade a child or you will be disrespectful for cultural practices. You will never behave in a way that can negatively affected the children towards trust and self-esteem
 - the touch or the use of vocabulary or the submission of proposals in an inappropriate way towards all the beneficiaries, irrespective of age, gender or any other characteristic.
 - develop personal relationships between a member of staff (paid or unpaid) and a beneficiary who is a current service user,
 - enter into a personal relationship (including social networks) with a person who has been a service user until the departure of the beneficiary from the shelter or

the services. It is allowed the connection of the beneficiary with the social network account of the shelter

- Passing on service users' personal contact details
- Accepting responsibility for any valuables on behalf of a beneficiary. Exceptionally, it is allowed only to shelters for unaccompanied children to keep the valuables of the beneficiaries as long as there is a safe-deposit box. In this case, the beneficiary will sign the appropriate document.
- Use of abusive language or response to inappropriate behaviour / language and the use of punishment or chastisement, or any abusive behavior
- Behave in disrespectful way (for example using disrespectful vocabulary or bad manner toward anybody etc.) and working under the influence of drugs or alcohol. It is reminded that they must behave with modesty and dignity and serve as role- models of behavior for children and youth.
- The publication of photos of the beneficiaries. Exceptionally, it is allowed the publication of photos of adults, after their written consent and minors after written consent from their parents or guardians. For unaccompanied children the publication of photos it is never allowed
- The watch of pornographic material with children. It is prohibited the watch, publication, production and sharing or pornographic material depicting children and/or the exhibition of every pornographic material to children during or not working hours
 - Especially with regard to children, it must be ensured that:
 - A volunteer and/or internship student is left alone with a child in a private space for any reason without supervision. Exceptionally, it allowed to make accompaniments
 - Never a child is used as an interpreter in processes and responsibilities (such as interview, social history etc.)
 - Never fondle, hold, hug, kiss or touch children in an improper way, taking into account what the child itself believes is improper, based on their cultural, ethnical, religious background and their gender.
 - Never collaborate with any private actor that acts in any way against the best interest of the child.
 - Never exploit a child for labor (ex. through domestic work).
 - Never show children's faces in presentations or publications and never publish a story or image which may endanger the child, their family or community or stigmatize the child as well as the use of every information or image of the children without the written consent by the parents / guardians taking in mind the will and opinion of the children, without forcing them to any kind of public exposure. Any information or photo regarding the history of children should not in every case expose them in danger or to stigmatize them.
 - Never give or encourage other people to give money directly to children, especially those being in vulnerable situations such as victims of exploitation, unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking and children in street situation

- ARSIS does not allow paid or unpaid staff to give gifts/money to or receive gifts/money from beneficiaries. However gifts may be provided by the organization as part of a planned activity.
- It is also reminded that each of the aforementioned professionals is additionally bound to the principles and rules of his/her professional code of conduct; the latter code is the one that it is formally and legally approved by each competent professional union in accordance with the greek legal framework and Arsis' Code of Principles and Values
- If a case of conflict of interests arises, the person/professional in concern shall refer and discuss it with the designated senior manager and/or ARSIS board.

If the professional boundaries and/or policies are breached this could result in disciplinary procedures or enactment of the allegation management procedures.

A written declaration shall be provided confirming the reading, understanding and agreement with the current Policy and the mandatory Code of Principles and Values and declaring the commitment to work in accordance with it (Annex 1).

1. 6. Reporting and allegations procedures

ARSIS establishes a special process regarding the stages of reporting safeguarding issues and concerns. This process refers to the immediate actions that shall be taken in case of safeguarding concerns.

1.6.1. Important procedural issues

- *Procedural principles:*

The process is based on ARSIS 'statutory mission and objectives, on the specific scope and the principles of this Policy stated in the current document (see pp 1.A to 1.C)

- *Main involved persons in the process - staff with designated authority:*
 - Referring person/submitting the report
 - Immediate manager of the referring person (if the concern is communicated by a staff, partner or volunteer member)
 - Principal contact - referral person

ARSIS Board/administrative council and Senior Managements Team members

The principal contact- referral person has a key role within the process (see below point 2 about the detailed roles and responsibilities concerning the Policy's management)

- *Recording of the reports:*

A written record of concerns reports shall be kept, including the actions that have been taken for its handling and the follow up actions. The person in charge for this record is

the “principal contact - referral person” appointed by ARSIS’ Board in cooperation with the Senior Management Team

- *Information sharing, data protection and confidentiality:*

Respect of the principles of trust, confidentiality and personal data protection is required. A safe information sharing process among the competent involved professionals/ stakeholders shall be followed. Data protection and confidentiality duty is expanded throughout the involvement in ARSIS works and tasks and even after that. The current legislation regarding the protection of privacy and personal data shall be respected.

- *Special safeguarding arrangements for ARSIS minors’ shelters*

Special safeguarding arrangements are provided for ARSIS minors’ shelters They are based on the scope, principles and code of conducted established by the current Policy and they are implemented in compliance with and complementary to the regulatory framework and Internal Operational Guides of each shelter.

Children have the right to live in a supportive, protective and caring environment; their placement shall match their needs, life situation, cultural and religious identity in compliance with their best interests and their empowerment for smooth transition to adulthood. Their safety, privacy and their rights to be properly informed, to be heard and participate in procedures and decisions that concern them shall be safeguarded and ensured.

Within this context a special complain – report mechanism shall be established in every shelter for the detection and reporting of concerns and infringements of the safeguarding Policy; ensuring

- a) immediate communication with and access to a principal contact – referral person and to independent authorities as well,
- b) appropriate support and legal aid when necessary.

1.6.2. A step by step process

1. Report of the concern - Communication:

- Any concern shall be communicated by the referring staff member or volunteer to his/her immediate manager and to the principal contact –. If the concern is related to the immediate manager’s behavior/acts, then the referral person shall be directly communicated.
- Especially, reports concerning volunteers or internship students should be addressed to the person responsible for the volunteers
- Any concern or complain by a third person (out of the staff, including volunteers and occasional visitors) or by a beneficiary shall be referred to the principal contact – referral person or (in absence of this person) to ARSIS Board.
- The referral person is responsible for properly and immediately refer to ARSIS Board.

2. Immediate attention and support:

If needed, medical and physiological attention and support shall be immediately accessed. Special care shall be taken for the assistance and protection of the children.

3. Assessment and decision making (decision options):

The principal contact - referral person shall try to figure out what has happened and establish the facts in the most objective and immediate manner possible. After assessing the reported concern, he submits his/her conclusions and suggestions to ARSIS board.

The latter in cooperation with the referral person and, if needed, with the Senior Management Team shall make a decision on a how - to -proceed action plan (this may include -depending on the case-: further protection actions in a safe and appropriate way, reference to local authorities, allegations process, conflict/complaint resolution process, disciplinary process etc).

4. Contact with concerned persons:

If the concern, as long as it is evaluated as legit, refers to a child, the family/parents/guardian of the child shall be contacted – provided that there is a family/supportive environment.

Following to the aforementioned 4 step process, and depending on the assessment of the case and the decision made on it, the steps below may follow:

5. Reference to competent authorities:

In case of serious safeguarding concerns or allegations, ARSIS Board shall report it to the competent local authority and ask for advice. The advice given shall be followed. Depending on the case, it may initiate judicial proceedings and/or other disciplinary process.

6. Disciplinary process

ARSIS Board in any case of alleged abuse and/or misconduct and/or infringement of the current Policy may proceed to the implementation of appropriate disciplinary measures, that, may indicatively include: the expulsion/termination /suspension (depending on the case) of the cooperation with the engaged alleged person, the withdrawal from the job, partner, volunteer contract (depending on the case), report to the competent official authorities and judicial authorities.

7. Implementing the right to inform

ARSIS shall reserve the right to inform other institutions which may apply for professional references of the termination of contract for serious violation of the principles of the protection of children within the legislative framework applicable to the protection of personal data.

PART 2. POLICY MANAGEMENT

1. Special issues for the protection of Beneficiaries

- The safety of the beneficiaries and their families must be ensured in an appropriate manner.
- Any information or experience on the profile, identity, background of beneficiaries should be used after the approval of ARSIS and with the appropriate consent of the concerned persons
- Photos, videos, and other images may not be taken and / or published or made public except where appropriate consent is given, provided that these images are primarily used with respect, do not expose the beneficiaries to any risk, violate the provisions on the protection of personal data and are not taken as sexual proposals. Children's photos can not be used in any case for profit or for journalistic purposes without written permission from ARSIS.
- In any case, it must be ensured that no disclosure of any information / photography / experience is made in such a way that the beneficiaries are victimized or stigmatized

Special issues concerning volunteers and visitors

In addition to jeopardizing the safety of the beneficiaries, visitors, volunteers and internship students can face the risk of being falsely accused of inappropriate behavior or abuse of children, young people and other beneficiaries. Therefore, the following special rules are put in place to protect the beneficiaries as well as the volunteers and visitors. For this reason:

- If they refuse to commit or fail to comply with this Code and the Code of Conduct, their volunteering / visit / internship will be terminated.
- Their visit will always be pre-arranged.
- They must comply with the instructions of the authorized ARSIS staff who will supervise their work or guide them during their visit.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

- *All staff (including permanent staff, contractors, partners, volunteers):*

Is bound to the principles and guidance laid out in this policy and linked policies. Specifically, staff, within the context of each define role/job position, is expected

- to use the required procedures
 - to promote good practice and to contribute to discussions about safeguarding
- to ensure that the voice of the beneficiaries, children and youth, to the protection of which the current Policy is concerned is listened and it is taken into account
 - to respect the professional boundaries and professional code of conduct referred in this document
- o *The Administrative Council/Board* is bound by this Policy as prescribed right above, and have the additional responsibilities:
 - to appropriately put in place this Policy and make sure that it is accessible to any concern person
 - to monitor and review the Policy
 - to ensure that all staff have access to appropriate training/information
 - to make sure that sufficient resources (time and money) are allocated to ensure that the policy can be effectively implemented
 - to receive staff and beneficiaries' concerns about safeguarding and respond to all seriously, swiftly and appropriately
 - to keep up to date with local arrangements, develop and maintain effective links with relevant agencies
- o *ARSIS Administrative Council/ Board with the assistance of the Senior Management Team has the final responsibility for:*
 - The implementation, monitoring and reviewing of the current Policy
 - Appointing a principal contact - referral person . The latter shall be responsible for:
 - a) Receiving the safeguarding concern reports and collecting any available data/information related to the reports
 - b) Keeping an updated written record of such reports
 - c) For immediately referring to ARSIS Board about the reports and any information/data collected
 - d) Collecting and assessing all the relevant data concerning the overall implementation of the Policy, giving relevant feedback and formulating suggestions to ARSIS Board and Senior Management Team towards the proper monitoring and evaluation of the Policy
 - e) Coordinating the required activities and procedures towards the effective implementation, monitoring, reviewing of the current policy

- f) In case a concern or allegation is against the aforementioned principal contact - referral person the report is directly adhered to ARSIS board.

2.1. Policy's main monitoring aspects

The main aspects of Safeguarding Policy that shall be monitored are related to:

- Safe recruitment process
 - Staff (paid and unpaid) training and support
- Update of the Policy with the current socio – legal framework and norms
- Assessing the report process of the safeguarding concerns and follow up of the relevant cases
- Examining the need for reviewing the current report process based on the aforementioned assessment
 - Inclusion of the inferior staff, volunteers and beneficiaries views and opinions

2.2. Communicating and commitment to the Policy

2.2.1. Ensuring beneficiaries' awareness

ARSIS will make beneficiaries aware of the Safeguarding Policy, using appropriate means that are in line with the age and the specific profile of each beneficiary, so as to ensure that the principles and procedure of this policy are adequately understood. Indicatively, these means may be:

- Discussion and briefing with each beneficiary about safeguarding arrangements and concern/complain procedures

2.2.2. Ensuring compliance of the present Policy by the visitors

Confirmation of awareness and explicit commitment to the Policy

Any person such as sponsors, , suppliers, donors, journalists, consultants, supporters (occasional visitors) who visit ARSIS infrastructures or offices and may come into contact and/or interact with children and young adults (ARSIS's beneficiaries)

- A briefing will be made of this Policy in order to be aware that they must act in accordance and comply with it whilst visiting ARSIS infrastructures or offices
- are properly informed on the report process and report any concern for the wellbeing of a child or young adult to the principal contact – referral person
- For the protection of the children residing in accommodation facilities, any external visit to the Shelter (sponsors, suppliers, donors, journalists, advisors, supporters and other occasional visitors) should be pre-agreed.

2.3. Reviewing of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed by ARSIS Board in cooperation with Senior Management Team through an inclusive democratic procedure, during which the feedback by all staff and volunteers as well as beneficiaries needs and views will be considered.

The need for reviewing will be regularly examined every three years and when there are changes in legislation or in circumstances or as a result of any other significant change or event.

The content of this policy is based on the safeguarded principles concerning children and youth rights and protections; the relevant templates, guidance, guidelines, policy principles and provisions that are proposed and/or adopted by other relevant institutions in child and youth protection field have been taken into account and they have been directly/precisely or indirectly included in this Policy.

For further information on the policy, please contact via email: arsisathina@gmail.com for Athens or infothes@arsis.gr for Thessaloniki

This policy is the responsibility of ARSIS Administrative Council and it is undersigned by its members.

ARSIS ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

I read the whole text
and I accept it

.....

(Location, Date)

.....

(Signature)

.....

(Name and surname)