

Safeguarding Policy - selfm.aid

Introduction

Please read this document carefully before your assignment for selfm.aid. Note down your questions, so we can discuss them personally during your introduction.

What is safeguarding?

“Safeguarding is the responsibility of organizations to make sure their staff, operations, and programs do no harm to children and adults at-risk nor expose them to abuse or exploitation. It is becoming good practice to think about how we safeguard everyone in our organizations at all times, including protecting staff and volunteers from harm and inappropriate behavior such as bullying and harassment” (Safeguarding resources, Bond).

Why is it important?

Traditionally, in the humanitarian context, NGOs are providing services and / or distributing lifesaving goods to people in need (beneficiaries). This constellation causes a big power inequality between the two parties. Unfortunately, this power has been, still is and will most likely always be abused by NGO staff members. Enough cases are evident, where staff members forced beneficiaries to have sex, abused them in another form or asked for heinous favors in exchange for humanitarian services / goods.

“Selfm.aid is committed to protecting all the people we work with, regardless of age, gender, disability, or ethnic origin from any form of harm that arises from coming into contact with our team members or programs - We have a zero tolerance for any form of abuse.”

You have probably chosen to work with us, because we, at selfm.aid, are committed to live another approach - we meet on eye level, acknowledge the resources and the skills of the people we work with (rather than the vulnerabilities) and work together to improve the living situation. We don't call the people we work with “beneficiaries” and the programs we offer, are designed together with the community.

But even if we try to minimize the power imbalance, there risks of potential harm, we cannot erase, and you should always be aware of:

- We have access to resources, the community does not have (as an organization but also on a very personal lever – (e.g., money, connections, knowledge of context, freedom of movement)
- We have a choice (to leave, to work somewhere else) – the community doesn't
- As part of selfm.aid, the community will trust you. A trust you would never receive, meeting in a different context. You have the duty never to misuse this trust.

Therefore, we will take all necessary measures to identify, prevent, report and respond to potential harm in the best and most responsible way.

Scope

Safeguarding Policy applies to all board members, staff (full time or part time) and volunteers of selfm.aid.

Safeguarding applies consistently and without exception across all areas of the organization's work where there is direct or indirect contact with children and vulnerable adults. It applies to all children and vulnerable adults regardless of their background and requires proactively identifying, preventing, and guarding against all risks of harm, exploitation and abuse. We commit to having robust, accountable, and transparent systems for response, reporting and learning when safeguarding risks materialize. Those systems include a duty of care to all actors who report allegations and concerns, and to adopt a survivor centered approach to the alleged victim/survivor

Purpose of Policy – PREVENT / REPORT / RESPOND

The purpose of this policy is to protect all people from any harm that may be caused due to their engagement with the staff or programs of selfm.aid and informs about the ours and yours responsibilities in order to protect the people we work with.

It includes the definition of harm, the measures we and you take to prevent them, defines the steps to take to report if you hear or have the suspicion of abuse and how we will / must respond to it.

Definitions / Terms

What is abuse?

Abuse can and does happen anywhere. It can happen at home, in a residential or nursing home, in a hospital, at work or in the street. There are different types of abuse, which include:

- **Physical** - being hurt or harmed either deliberately or through rough, careless or thoughtless behavior.
- **Emotional** abuse or bullying - being humiliated or put down or made to feel anxious or frightened.
- **Financial** abuse or theft - someone using your money or possessions in a way that you don't want.
- **Neglect** - not being given the things you need to feel safe and comfortable or not making sure you get the care or treatment you need.
- **Sexual abuse** - being made to do something that you don't want to do.
- **Discrimination** - including racist, sexist or abuse about a person's disability.
- **Domestic abuse** - examples include psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse or 'honor'-based violence.
- **Modern slavery** - includes slavery, human trafficking and forced labor.
- **Organizational abuse** - includes neglect and poor care within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home.
- **Self-neglect** - includes not caring for personal cleanliness, health or surroundings, and displaying behavior such as hoarding.

Who might abuse?

The person who is responsible for the abuse is often well known to the person abused. They could be:

- A paid carer or volunteer.
- A health worker, social care or other worker.
- A relative, friend or neighbor.
- An employer.

- Another resident or service user.
- An occasional visitor or someone who is providing a service.
- Someone who deliberately exploits vulnerable people.

Who is vulnerable to abuse?

Vulnerability refers to "the quality or state of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally." The lack of resources (safety, relationships, knowledge or local laws, customs and language, financial means, mental, physical, the separation from family and friends etc.) all adds to the risk of being vulnerable.

"Selfm.aid commits to addressing safeguarding throughout its work, through the three pillars of prevention, reporting and response."

1. Prevention

Selfm.aid responsibilities:

- **Program design:** We design and undertake all our programs and activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their contact with selfm.aid.
- **Safer recruiting:** We implement safeguarding procedures already when recruiting volunteers and staff members (this is why you had to provide us all the necessary personal documents and information).
- **Informing:** We ensure that everyone who is working with / for selfm.aid has access to, is familiar with, and knows their responsibilities within this policy (everyone will receive and is asked to read this policy before the start of the assignment, will have a personal introduction and the duty to commit to it at the first day of the assignment, before accessing the program).
- **Code of Conduct:** One of the main tools for prevention is our Code of Conduct (see attachment). This is the framework we all must adhere to at all times during the assignment. It identifies potential risks and sets the necessary boundaries. You must read it carefully, discuss it with us in detail during the introduction, review it with us regularly and respect it all times during your stay.
- **Data Protection:** We only gather data of the people we work with to ensure the administrative processes of the project. You will only have access to the data which is required for your work and must protect it at any given time.
- **Review:** We will review the policies, the code of conduct and discuss potential questions regularly during the weekly welfare-meetings. We ask you to participate actively and always openly address concerns or questions.
- **Training:** If necessary, we will ensure that everybody who is working with and for selfm.aid receives training on safeguarding at a level appropriate to their role.
- **React:** We will take every concern seriously and follow up on reports of safeguarding concerns promptly.

Your / staff responsibilities:

- **Prepare:** You must send us all the required personal documents, read and understand the policies and the welcome package you are receiving prior to your assignments and raise potential questions immediately or the latest during your introduction on the first day.
- **Ask / Feedback:** If you don't understand a rule or a policy or don't agree with, ask you coordinator. We are always taking time to explain the reason of our procedures or learn from you about our blind spots.
- **Commit:** You are asked to sign that you have understood and are committed to implement safeguarding with us during the entire duration of your engagement with selfm.aid.
- **Child safeguarding:** To protect children, you must never: Engage in sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18 / sexually abuse or exploit a child / subject a child to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect / engage in any commercially exploitative activities with children incl. child labor or trafficking (even if we don't engage with children in the SKILLS FACTORY (adults only), it's likely that you will meet and engage with minors on team events, during our stay in Vathy and around. Their traumatic experiences from the past may lead them to seek attachment to strangers faster and closer than normally what exposes them to further risks. Selfm.aid safeguarding policy is applicable for any time, irrelevant if it is work or free time).
- **Adult safeguarding:** You must never: Sexually abuse or exploit adults / subject an adult to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect / engage in any commercially exploitative activities with adults incl. modern slavery, forced labor or trafficking
- **Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse:** You must never: Exchange money, employment, goods or services for sexual activity. This includes any exchange of assistance or goods / engage in any sexual relationships with the people we work with, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics!
- **Contribute:** You should always contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents safeguarding violations and promotes the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy.
- **Report:** Report any concerns or suspicions regarding safeguarding violations by a selfm.aid staff member to the appropriate person (see 2. Reporting).

2. Reporting

Even if we take all possible measures to prevent any form of harm, we have to acknowledge that harm can happen, even if we work all together, and are strongly committed to protect the people we work with. Therefore, it is important, that we all know, how to react in case we are witnessing or having the suspicion of a safeguarding concern:

Selfm.aid responsibilities:

- **Transparent reporting mechanism:** We have the responsibility to ensure that appropriate reporting systems are in place, everyone knows about it and has access to it (distributed to every new member of the team, part of the introduction, published on ground and on the website). We also accept complaints from external sources such as members of the public, partners and official bodies.
- **Take you seriously:** We have the responsibility to take every safeguarding concern seriously and follow up with the highest due diligence possible.
- **Protect:** Everybody who is reporting concerns or complaints through our formal whistleblowing channels (or if they request it) are protected by selfm.aid whistleblowing policy.
- **Serious Incident Reporting:** Serious incidents are directly reported to our partners, Choose Love, Ero Kovlakidou (ero@choose.love). (Harm to your charity's beneficiaries, staff, volunteers, or others who come into contact with your charity through its work/ loss of your charity's money or assets / damage to your charity's property / harm to your charity's work or reputation).

Your / staff responsibilities:

- **Report / do not hesitate:** If, you hear of something, witness anything or have the suspicion of a safeguarding concern, you should never hesitate to report this immediately.

How to report a safeguarding concern

If you are on ground and you have a complaint or concern relating to safeguarding, you should report it immediately to the project- / volunteer coordinator or the project management:

SKILLS FACTORY, Samos

- **Simone van den Akker** (skillsfactory@selfm.aid.ch)
- **Simon Bader** (simon.bader@selfm-aid.ch)

Other Projects by selfm.aid

- **Julia Minder** (julia.minder@selfm-aid.ch)

If you don't feel comfortable reporting to them (for example if you feel that the report will not be taken seriously, or if that person is implicated in the concern) you may report to any other appropriate staff member or directly to the responsible person for HR and whistleblowing-concerns:

- **Mithat Foster** (hr@selfm-aid.ch)

For all other concerns and further details about the processes how we handle complains, please consider our whistleblowing policy.

3. Response:

Ensure safety of survivor: We ensure that the person who has experienced / is experiencing harm through a person associated with selfm.aid is in safety and there is no risk of repetition.

Disciplinary consequences: We will apply immediate, appropriate and strict disciplinary measures to everybody found in breach of this safeguarding policy. This can include immediate dismissal and a report to the local authorities where a crime has been committed.

Support of survivor: We will offer support to survivors of harm caused by staff or associated personnel of selfm.aid, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out (such as an internal investigation). Decisions regarding support will be led by the survivor.

Legal consequences: We will immediately follow up safeguarding reports and concerns according to policy and procedure, and legal and statutory obligations.

Confidentiality

It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need-to-know basis only and should be kept secure at all times.

Implementation and Review.

The safeguarding policy will be sent to everybody (board members, staff and volunteers) prior the assignment for selfm.aid and we ask you to read it properly and note questions in advance.

As part of the induction process, we will discuss it properly, and you will be asked to sign the codes of conduct.

Staff with specific safeguarding responsibilities will be trained to receive and respond professionally to safeguarding concerns and allegations.

We will furthermore insure, that also community volunteers and everybody else connected with selfm.aid and its project is informed and has access to the policy, the code of conduct and the reporting procedures for safeguarding concerns (Website, Induction Package, Posters and Leaflets at all premises).

Selfm.aid will continually evaluate its safeguarding practice and update its policy following an annual review by the board of the association.