



Online  
**Safety**  
Commission

# CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY 2024

July 31<sup>st</sup> 2024

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Online Safety Commission (OSC) gratefully acknowledges the invaluable collaboration with UNICEF and ChildFund Australia in developing and integrating our Child Safeguarding Policy. The workshops conducted by ChildFund Australia on February 7th, 8th, and 20th, 2024, along with the Child Safeguarding Risk Management Workshop led by UNICEF, have significantly contributed to enhancing our commitment to safeguarding children online as well as offline. We extend our sincere appreciation to both organizations for their expertise and dedication to this critical cause.



**Tajeshwari Devi**  
**Acting Commissioner**  
**Online Safety Commission**

The policy is effective from 31<sup>st</sup> of July, 2024. This policy shall be reviewed every three years.

## 1. DEFINITIONS

**Child** – The Online Safety Commission uses the Online Safety Act 2018, which means an individual who has not reached 18 years of age.

**Child Protection** – The term used to describe the responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or stop children being harmed, abused, exploited or neglected.

**Child Safeguarding** - Within the Online Safety Commission, "Child Safeguarding" refers to our policies, procedures, and practices aimed at ensuring the safety of children who come in contact with our organization. The Child Safeguarding Policy, signed by all staff and associates, to implement and uphold these principles effectively.

**Child Abuse** - Behaviours and treatment resulting in actual or potential harm to a child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Child abuse includes physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, exploitation and exposure to family violence. Child abuse can occur online or in person.

- **Physical Abuse** - Physical force used against a child that results in harm to the child. This includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling, poisoning, inappropriate restraint or confinement; or cultural practices that could cause long term distress, harm or health ramifications such as female genital mutilation.
- **Emotional (Psychological) Abuse** - A continuing pattern of inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child or failure over time to provide a child with adequate nurturing and emotional availability in line with their age and developmental stage. This includes threats, rejection, isolation, belittling, and name calling.
- **Sexual Abuse** - When a child is forced or persuaded to take part in any type of sexual act. These can be contact or noncontact acts, online or offline, including sexualised language, voyeurism, inappropriate touching, forced removal of clothing, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration and exposing a child to sexual activity including pornography. It also includes creating, accessing, possessing and sharing child sexual abuse material and grooming. Children can be sexually abused by both adults and other children who are in a position of responsibility, trust or holding greater power.
- **Neglect** - The persistent failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for the child's physical and emotional development and well-being. This generally includes health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions.
- **Exploitation** - Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for purposes or for profiting sexually, monetarily, socially or politically from exploitation of another. This includes, but is not limited to, unacceptable child labour, child sexual exploitation, child sexual abuse materials or trafficking including forced marriage.

**Child Sexual Abuse Material** – various forms of computer-generated, digitally or manually crafted images, graphics or animation - visual, audio, or written - that depicts a child engaged in sexual activity; or the sexual organs of a child, for primarily sexual purposes. It is an offence to possess, access, share or create this type of material.

**Dealing/working with children** - This refers to individuals who work in a role that requires regular interaction with children, either as outlined in their job description or due to the nature of their work that brings them into frequent contact with children.

**Staff** – This is referred to all the employees, including the Commissioner.

**Stakeholders** – This is referred to all the consultants, researchers, and partner organizations.

**Volunteers** – This is referred to all students and interns, and other unpaid staff such as youth champions, working for the Online Safety Commission.

**OSC** – Online Safety Commission

**Sexual exploitation** – Sexual exploitation involves using physical, emotional, or online means to manipulate, coerce, or abuse individuals for sexual purposes, whether through physical contact, psychological manipulation, or online grooming and coercion. This includes sexual communication for the purpose of obtaining sexual gratification.

**Grooming** – Luring a child with the intention to procure the child for sexual activity. Involves a process of building trust and rapport with a child to later exploit.

## 2. ONLINE SAFETY COMMISSION

The Online Safety Commission (OSC) is an independent regulator for online safety in Fiji.

The Online Safety Act 2018 was enacted by the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji to establish the Online Safety Commission for the promotion of online safety, deterrence of harmful electronic communication and for related matters. The OSC started its operations in 2019 to provide an avenue to assist individuals confronted with harmful online content by delivering services and resources that help minimize the harm and educate ways to be proactive and safe online.

The Commission is actively pursuing efficient ways to promote online safety across the nation while establishing internationally recognized content to uphold stakeholders to a degree of integrity for digital spaces to be used productively and proactively with safety and responsibility at the forefront of our value system.

## 3. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The Online Safety Commission is committed to safeguarding children's rights by minimizing the risk of child abuse and preventing harm to children in its programs and activities through the implementation of its Child Safeguarding Policy. This policy serves as a practical guide to ensure our people and activities do no harm to children and includes risk management strategies. It outlines prevention measures and clear reporting processes to respond to child safeguarding concerns.

The procedures outlined in this Policy aim to ensure that everyone understands their child safeguarding responsibilities, maintain a positive work environment for staff, and create safe environments where children are protected and empowered to thrive.

This policy applies to all the:

- Staff, including the Commissioner;
- Volunteers, including students and interns as well as youth champions;
- Stakeholders, including Consultants, Researchers and partner organisations;
- People visiting programs where they will have contact with children, including donors.

## 4. POLICY PRINCIPLES

Children should be protected from all forms of abuse including physical, emotional/psychological, sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation both online and offline. The OSC is committed to protecting the children by following the following principles:

- **Child-Centric Approach:** Prioritize the rights, best interests and well-being of children in all activities and decisions.
- **Preventive Measures:** Implement proactive measures to prevent harm to children from occurring, including risk assessments and safeguarding training programs.
- **Transparent Reporting:** Establish clear and accessible reporting procedures for safeguarding concerns or suspicions of child abuse, ensuring confidentiality and protection for those reporting.
- **Swift Action and Response:** Commit to prompt and appropriate action in response to child safeguarding reports, including cooperation with law enforcement and child protection agencies.
- **Accountability and Responsibility:** Hold all staff and stakeholders accountable for upholding child safeguarding principles and fulfilling their responsibilities to ensure zero tolerance of violence against children, exploitation and abuse. Continuous Education and Training. Provide ongoing education and training to staff, volunteers and stakeholders on child safeguarding policies, procedures, and relevant laws.
- **Support for Victims and Survivors:** Facilitate access to support services for victims and survivors of child abuse and exploitation, including access to counselling and legal assistance.
- **Partnership and Collaboration:** Foster partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and community organizations, to strengthen online child protection efforts and share best practices.
- **Regular Review and Improvement:** Conduct regular reviews and evaluations of the Child Safeguarding Policy to ensure its effectiveness and relevance, making necessary adjustments to enhance protection measures.

## 5. REPORTING PROCESS FOR CHILD SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

### Who should report?

- Any OSC staff member, volunteer or stakeholder as defined in this policy.
- Any community member

### What to report?

- Any content or behaviour that puts a child at risk or harms their well-being
- Any breaches of this child safeguarding policy
- Stakeholders of the Commission should also report any information that may help protect children from harm.
- Where an individual or organization has already reported, but becomes aware of additional information, the individual or organization must report that information.

### When to report?

- If you come across any content or behaviour that puts a child at risk or harms their well-being, it is essential to report it immediately.
- All concerns must be reported within 24 hours.

### Who to report to?

- The safety and wellbeing of any child should never be compromised, and it is our collective responsibility to take action against any form of abuse or neglect.
- In cases where child abuse allegations arise against staff, volunteers or stakeholders, it is crucial to report such incidents promptly to the Commissioner.
- If a student is involved, immediately report to the school Child Protection Officer and School Head in addition to the Commissioner.

### How to report?

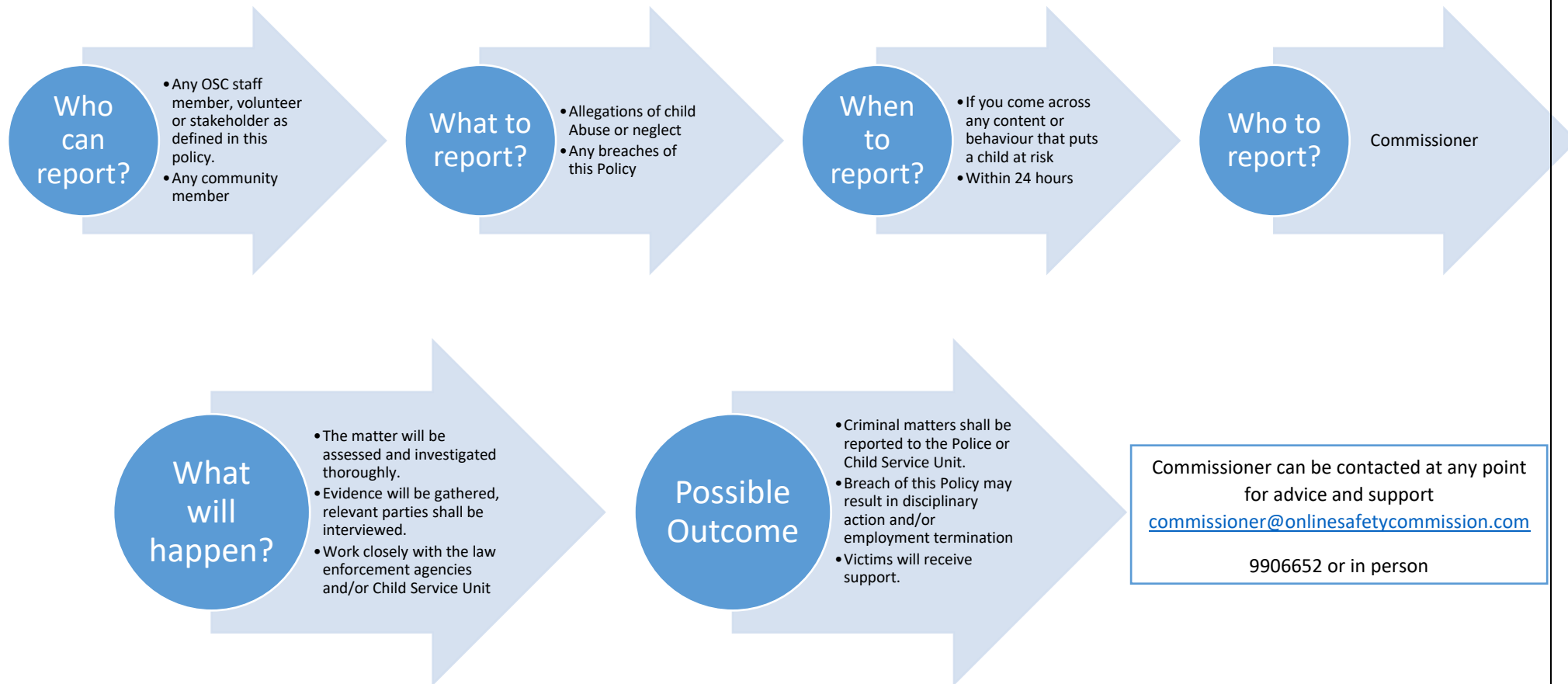
- Contact the Commissioner via phone on 9906652, email [commissioner@onlinesafetycommission.com](mailto:commissioner@onlinesafetycommission.com) or in person at the OSC office in Suva.

### What will happen?

- When a matter is reported to the OSC, swift action is taken to investigate the issue thoroughly. This may involve gathering evidence, interviewing relevant parties, and collaborating with law enforcement agencies if necessary. The ultimate goal is to ensure that the child in question is safe from harm and that appropriate measures are taken to prevent further incidents from occurring.
- In cases where abuse or neglect is suspected, the OSC will work closely with Child Service Unit to intervene and provide support for the child and their family. When reporting to allegations, the Commissioner has the responsibility to ensure staff, volunteers and stakeholders are treated fairly, and that the rights of each individual are respected during an investigation.

### Possible outcomes

- If a criminal matter or child protection report is made, the matter will be reported to the Police or the Child Service Unit which may result in legal action being taken against the perpetrator, ensuring justice and protection for the child involved.
- If a staff member is found to be breaching this Policy, they may face disciplinary action, termination of employment, and legal consequences for their actions.
- Victims receive support and have their safety needs assessed and responded to, ultimately creating a safer environment for all involved.



**Feedback will be given where possible to those directly involved or affected, protecting confidentiality and privacy. Debriefing or counselling to be offered if needed. \*OSC does not provide counselling services however, relevant authorities can be contacted.**



## 6. IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

All staff and stakeholders must sign a Declaration form prior to commencing employment, or at the commencement of this policy.

All volunteers including students and interns must also sign the Declaration from prior to recruitment.

Declaration signed by staff, volunteers and stakeholders must be returned to the OSC office, for filing on personnel records.

## 7. RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

### *Interview Questions*

Child safeguarding behavioural-based interview questions are used by a selection panel to assess all candidates for positions with the OSC, as well as OSC stakeholders working with children. Written notes will be stored on file.

### *Reference Checks*

At least three reference checks will be conducted by phone for all applicants, with written notes stored on file. Referees must be someone who knows you well and you have worked under them (or studied under such as lecturer or tutor).

### *Signing of Policy*

Child Safeguarding Policy must be signed before employment or contract commences.

### *Police Clearance*

Police clearance will be conducted within one month of contract commencing and updated every three years thereafter.

## 8. TRAINING

All training will be recorded in a training register.

<b>Induction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•When: Within one week of commencing</li><li>•Content: Policy attached to contract</li><li>•Outcome: Signed policy</li></ul>
<b>Comprehensive training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•When: Within 3 months</li><li>•Length: Half day</li><li>•Content: Powerpoint presentation</li></ul>
<b>Refresher training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•When: Annually for all staff</li><li>•Length: Half day</li><li>•Content: Powerpoint presentation</li></ul>

## 9. PROTECTING CHILDREN’S DATA AND INFORMATION

Children’s data (images, personal details, data) is considered highly sensitive and requires strict protection, storage and privacy.

- **Protecting Sensitive Data:** Restrict access and sharing of sensitive information to authorized personnel only, implement strong data encryption and secure storage method.
- **Training of Staff:** Provide regular training for all staff on data protection principles and best practices for handling sensitive information.

## 10. LEGISLATION RELEVANT TO CHILD PROTECTION

A range of local/Fiji laws are relevant to this policy:

Legislation	Offence	Maximum Penalty
Online Safety Act 2018	Any person who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence	liable upon conviction to: (a) in the case of an individual, a fine not exceeding \$20,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years or both; and (b) in the case of body corporate, a fine not exceeding \$100,000 and for a director, manager or officer in charge for the time being, to a fine not exceeding \$50,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 7 years or both
Child Welfare Act 2010	Disclosing identity of persons	Default fine of \$5,000
Child Welfare Act 2010	Fails to give notice (of abuse/harm)	Liable to a fine not exceeding \$5,000
Child Welfare Act 2010	Obstructing	Liable to fine not exceeding \$5,000 or imprisonment term not exceeding 18 months or both

## 11. CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY DECLARATION

Children who engage with the OSC and its programs, whether locally or internationally, are provided with the utmost protection against child abuse and sexual exploitation.

It is imperative that all individuals affiliated with the OSC possess a comprehensive understanding of the issue and the associated risks. This includes staff members, volunteers, and stakeholders, who must exhibit exemplary conduct towards children in both their personal and professional lives. They must never exploit the trust placed in them as members of the OSC community. It is their responsibility to take all necessary measures to prevent, report, and appropriately address such matters.

The Child Safeguarding Policy encompasses mandatory guidelines that are applicable to all aspects of the OSC's work, be it advocacy and campaigns, development programs, or humanitarian and emergency responses.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (FULL NAME) agree that in the course of my association with the Online Safety Commission,

### I WILL:

- Follow this policy and procedures and stay alert to child safeguarding and protection risks.
- Immediately report any concerns or allegations of child abuse or other safeguarding concerns, or breaches of this Policy following the OSC's reporting process.
- Adhere to local, national, and international child protection laws.
- Participate in child protection training as directed by OSC.
- Treat all children and young people with respect, regardless of their race, colour, gender and sexuality, language, disability, religion, political or other opinions, national, ethnic or social origin, birth or other status.
- Create a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment for children, young people, parents, employees, and volunteers.
- Encourage children, young people, parents, employees, and volunteers to voice their concerns and issues, responding with understanding and without judgment.
- Involve child's parents/guardian wherever possible and appropriate
- Whenever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working with children or in close proximity to them.
- Avoid physical contact with children.
- Treat children's information and data with confidentiality and store safely.
- Inform my supervisor/manager of any situation where my actions could be misinterpreted.
- Inform my supervisor/manager if I am involved in any situation that could bring disrepute to the organization.
- Inform my supervisor/manager if I am being investigated for any crime or charged with a criminal offense.

**AND I WILL NOT:**

- use inappropriate language, whether it is offensive, discriminatory, demeaning, abusive, or of a sexual nature, when speaking with or in the presence of a child or young person.
- Engage in behaviour that aims to shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade a child or young person, or emotionally abusing them in any way.
- Use physical or harmful punishment, or abuse a child or young person.
- Engage in any form of sexual activity or have a sexual relationship with anyone under the age of 18, regardless of the age of majority or consent. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.
- Hold, kiss, cuddle, or touch a child in an inappropriate, unnecessary, or culturally insensitive way.
- Condone or participate in behaviour with children that is illegal, unsafe, or abusive, or may put a child at risk of abuse.
- Discriminate against or show unfair differential treatment or favouritism towards particular children to the exclusion of others.
- Post photographs and/or videos of children on my personal social media platforms.
- Have contact outside of work requirements with any child or young person connected with OSC's programs, including contact on social media or other messaging services.
- Possess, access, distribute, or create child sexual abuse materials.
- Take photos and/or videos of children with my personal device.
- Using computers, mobile phones, video or digital cameras, or any other technology for the purpose of exploiting or harassing children.

**USE OF CHILDREN'S IMAGES**

Prior to capturing images or videos of a child for work-related purposes,

**I WILL:**

- have a purpose for which the image is being collected.
- obtain verbal consent from the children and/or their parent or guardian, and document this consent. Additionally, I will explain how the photographs or films will be used. Whenever possible, I will obtain written consent.
- Provide opportunities to children to not have their photos taken (such as in activity registration form and in announcements).
- Follow the process of the authorities/school where the photos are being taken.
- assess and adhere to any local customs or restrictions regarding the reproduction of personal images.
- ensure that photograph and video images, portray children in a dignified and respectful manner, avoiding any depiction that may make them appear vulnerable or submissive.
- Children will be appropriately clothed and posed in a manner that is not sexually suggestive.
- ensure that the images accurately represent the situations and facts without any misrepresentation.
- safeguard the identities of children and young people in photographic and electronic and print materials, ensuring that their identities and locations are not disclosed.
- securely store these files and limit access to relevant staff members on a need-to-know basis.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive or exclusive. All staff, volunteers, partners, and stakeholders should always refrain from engaging in actions or conduct that may misrepresent behaviour, constitute poor practice, or potentially be abusive.

## SIGNED DECLARATION

- I acknowledge that I have reviewed and comprehended OSC's Child Safeguarding Policy.
- I commit to adhering to the guidelines outlined in the policy.
- I am aware that any violation of this policy may lead to disciplinary action including termination of my employment with OSC and potential legal consequences.
- I am aware that any violation of this policy may provide grounds for my appointment or association with the OSC to be terminated and potential legal consequences.
- It is my duty, as a representative of OSC, to exercise good judgment and refrain from engaging in any actions that could harm or exploit children or young people.
- I grant permission to OSC to conduct necessary investigations, such as criminal background checks and reference verifications, during my recruitment process.
- I confirm my readiness to participate in OSC's child safeguarding training sessions.

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**SIGNATURE**

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**JOB TITLE**

.....

**FULL NAME**

.....

**DATE**