

SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTION POLICY

Real Life Research Institute is committed to empowering individuals around the world. We are committed to ensuring that during our work, all individuals will be treated with respect and dignity and protected from all forms of harm, including sexual violence.

Our Safeguarding Policy will take every measure in our power to ensure that children or any other program participants in the course of our work will be protected from any possible harm. We recognize the need for the protection of all individuals of diverse genders, sexualities, ethnicities, faiths, cultures, and disability.

Section One: Scope and Eligibility

This Policy applies to all employees (temporary and permanent), consultants, interns, volunteers, and affiliates of Real-Life Research Institute both during and outside of work hours.

Section Two: Policy Statement

Real Life Research Institute affirms the inherent rights, freedom, dignity, and equality of all people, including children, as outlined in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(UDHR\)](#) and the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#).

Real Life Research Institute forbids any abuse of power in harming or abusing children or program participants, including sexual violence of any form, including sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment (SEAH). We will

take a zero-tolerance stance on any such abusive incidents within our organization.

Section Three: Our Core Safeguarding Commitments

We herein take the opportunity to emphasize the following:

1. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is forbidden, irrespective of the age of consent within the country of operation. A mistaken belief about the age of the child is not a defense. We will take action to ensure that no child abuser is involved with Real Life Research Institute in any way.
2. All employees/ representatives working on behalf of the Real Life Research Institute are responsible for raising concerns reported according to this Policy.
3. Real Life Research Institute will uphold all relevant safeguarding standards, including safe recruitment and training.
4. When appropriate and applicable, Real Life Research Institute may involve children and program participants through consultation to ensure we deliver programs in a safe environment with safeguarding measures in place. We will see to it that complaint and feedback mechanisms are accessible to children and program participants in formats they can understand.
5. As appropriate, all those associated with the delivery of our programs **MUST** follow this Safeguarding and Protection Policy (SPP) and adhere to the behavioral standards outlined in the “Safeguarding Code of Conduct” in section twelve of this policy.

6. We shall ensure that the incident reporting procedures are child-friendly and accessible to program participants.
7. Should a child or program participant be involved in a safeguarding incident, Real Life Research Institute will take special precautions to ensure the case is managed in the best interest of the child or program participant.
8. We will take any breach of this Policy with all seriousness, which will include disciplinary action, including termination, and any other legal remedies.
9. Real Life Research Institute will take all measures in research, investigation, and other means to incorporate best practices for safeguarding in real time.

10 Real Life Research Institute will safeguard children and program participants through four key areas: **awareness, prevention, reporting, and response.**

11 We shall make it a priority to be accountable to the individuals and communities we work with by committing to the following:

- Transparency about our programs, activities, and services that communities/individuals are entitled to.
- Raising awareness about our Code of Conduct, policies, and reporting procedures.
- Actively seeking feedback from the communities we work with.
- Informing communities of the changes we make because of their feedback.

Section Four: Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities

It takes everyone involved to ensure a safe working environment at Real Life Research Institute. The safeguarding and protection of children and program participants is the responsibility of everyone involved in the delivery of Real Life Research Institute programs. Failure to act on concerns or disclosures relating to the abuse or exploitation of children or program participants is not an option. Employees and affiliates will be made aware of their responsibility to uphold this Policy.

All staff, associates, and visitors shall:

- a. Contribute to an environment in which individuals feel respected, supported, safe, and protected
- b. Never act violently towards children or program participants or put them in any way at risk of violence
- c. Abide by this Safeguarding Policy
- d. Confidentially report any concerns, rumors, suspicions, allegations of harm, violence, SEAH, or any breach of this Policy within 24 hours following the reporting procedure outlined in this Policy.

All staff shall:

- a. Comply with this Safeguarding Policy, including its Safeguarding Code of Conduct

Partners, Associates, and Visitors shall:

- a. Agree by signature with this Safeguarding Policy or comply with their own Safeguarding Policy, provided it complies with and is consistent with this one.

Managers shall see to it that:

- a. The children, program participants, and communities in which we engage are made aware of this Safeguarding Policy and feel confident and able to report any incidents occurring against children or program participants.
- b. Staff, associates, and visitors are aware of the Safeguarding Implementation Standards applicable to their engagement with Real Life Research Institute.
- c. Support and develop systems that contribute to the protection of children and program participants

Organizations that collaborate with us in carrying out projects, programs, and events involving children and program participants must comply with this Safeguarding Policy and its Code of Conduct.

All Real Life Research Institute employees, volunteers, including Board members, must sign an acknowledgement of receipt, understanding, and acceptance of this Policy.

Section Five: Zero Tolerance for Harm

Real Life Research Institute has a zero tolerance for incidents of violence or abuse against children or program participants, including sexual exploitation or abuse, committed by either our employees or people affiliated with us.

Section Six: Program Delivery

Program development will involve children, families, and communities in assessing children and program participants and safeguarding practices that ensure the well-being of children and participants.

All program designs will take into consideration the interests of diverse children and program participants, considering their different needs.

Feedback mechanisms will include and call for inquiries and suggestions relating to safeguarding practices.

Real Life Research Institute will conduct regular reviews and updates of this Safeguarding Policy to ensure it remains current and effective.

Section Seven: Recruitment

We will not recruit staff with a background of child sexual exploitation or abuse, in any case, not in work directly involving children and program participants.

All staff, upon employment, will be briefed on our Safeguarding Policy; training on safeguarding may be received from a third party for staff or volunteers who work directly with children or program participants.

All staff shall be required to provide a background check upon employment.

References will be asked if they have any knowledge as to whether the applicant has been involved or alleged to be involved in any child protection, sexual exploitation, or abuse incident, past or present.

Section Eight: Communications

To prevent any harm associated with Real Life Institute communications, any information of a child or program participant that could be used to identify their location will not be used on Real Life Research Institute websites, social media, or any other form of communication.

To ensure the privacy and safeguarding of children and program participants when photographing or filming, or taking their stories for work-related purposes, employees and associates must:

- Obtain informed consent from the program participant or the child and the parent/guardian of the child before filming, photographing, or obtaining their story. An explanation of how the photograph, film, or story will be used must be provided.
- Ensure photographs, films, videos, and DVDs present children or program participants in a dignified and respectful manner, and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children and program participants should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive.
- Ensure images and stories are honest representations of the context and the facts.
- Ensure file labels, metadata, or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing pictures or stories in any form.
- Make sure local traditions or restrictions on reproducing personal images are respected.

Section Nine: Conduct

Real Life Research Institute employees and affiliates must comply with applicable national legislation, including the Criminal Code of Canada, UN Treaties, and Real Life Research Institute policies and procedures as they relate to child Safeguarding and protection.

Real Life Research Institute employees and affiliates must abide by the Safeguarding Code of Conduct embedded in this Safeguarding Policy.

Section Ten: Safeguarding Incident Reporting

Any Real Life Research Institute employee or affiliate who is concerned, suspects, or has been made aware of a safeguarding incident should immediately report the matter to:

- a) The Real Life Research Institute's designated Safeguarding Focal Point.
- b) Real Life Research Institute International Safeguarding Director; or
- c) Where confidentiality is needed or preferred, or the above options are unavailable for whatever reason, call the Real Life Research Institute Whistleblower hotline: +1(613) 858 2669
- d) In case of an immediate threat to life, the local authorities should be called.

Real Life Research Institute maintains appropriate confidentiality of Safeguarding incidents, except in cases where lawfully permitted, for the prosecution of suspected criminal activity, to meet donor and regulatory requirements, support learning and accountability, advocate to prevent future incidents, or as required by law.

Information about ongoing investigations of Safeguarding Incidents, and information about past incidents will be strictly shared with only those who need to know, and as deemed necessary by the Real Life Research Institute's Safeguarding Focal Point or the Real Life Institute's International Safeguarding Director.

If sensitive information about survivors or violence against children or program participants will put them or others at risk if unauthorized parties access it, such information should not be collected.

Disciplinary measures shall be taken against any individual who victimizes or attempts to deter those who report concerns of any violations of this Safeguarding Policy.

Section Eleven: Reporting to Authorities

Real Life Research Institute will give the highest consideration to the best interests of survivors, including any legal obligations to report a safeguarding violation to the appropriate legal authorities. Generally, reports will be made, except in cases where it is likely to cause greater harm to existing survivors and potential future victims.

Section Twelve: Safeguarding Code of Conduct

Those involved in delivering Real Life Research Institute programs/ services must:

- Behave in a way that aligns with the values of Real Life Research Institute, as well as this Safeguarding policy and related policies.
- Treat all individuals respectfully, fairly, and equally, regardless of their race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, nationality, ethnicity, social origin, property, disability, sexual orientation, or other status.
- Ensure that children and participants are aware of their rights, including the right to express their views on matters that affect them and their surroundings.

- Declare any conflict of interest regarding a child or program participant taking part in Real Life Research Institute programs.
- Disclose all charges, convictions, and any other outcomes of an offence relating to child exploitation and abuse, including those under traditional law, which occurred before or occur during association with Real Life Research Institute.
- Make use of Real-Life Research Institute training and awareness sessions to increase understanding of what constitutes various elements of child or program participant abuse.
- Declare any previously existing relationships with community members to their line managers.
- Immediately report any concerns or suspicions relating to SEAH in accordance with sections ten and eleven of this Safeguarding Policy.
- Create and maintain an environment that prevents SEAH and any form of abuse.
- Never use inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, culturally unacceptable, or humiliating language or behavior towards children and program participants.
- Never engage children in any form of sexual intercourse or activity, including paying for sexual services or engaging in other transactional forms of sexual services with anyone under 18 years old (or under the local age of consent if it is above 18), or any of the program participants.
- Never engage in any form of child or program participant abuse, whether sexual, physical, emotional, neglect, grooming, harassment, or exploitation via digital or other means.

- Never engage in sexual relationships with other employees/related personnel and community members we work with, as such relationships are based on unequal power structures and may undermine the credibility and integrity of Real Life Research Institute's work.
- Never engage in family violence, including (but not limited to) female genital mutilation, child marriage, trafficking, and child labor.
- Whenever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working with children.
- Not sleep close to unsupervised children except where absolutely necessary, in which case this should be immediately reported to the manager, and if possible, make sure another adult is present (This does not apply to one's children or in situations where the employee is acting as a guardian to the child).
- Not in the capacity of engagement with Real Life Institute, visit a child's or program participants' home alone, or invite unaccompanied children or program participants into their home or accommodation, except in the case that they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
- Comply with all relevant legislation, including labor laws in relation to child labor.
- Not use physical or humiliating punishment on children or program participants.
- Not consume alcohol or illicit drugs when working with or in contact with children or program participants.

- Not discriminate against or favor particular children or program participants to the exclusion of others.
- Not seek to make contact or spend time with any child or program participant connected with Real Life Research Institute programs or activities outside of the designated program or activity time.
- Not abuse their position by withholding professional assistance, or giving preferential treatment, gifts, or payment of any kind to a child or program participant, or another person in relation to them, to solicit any form of advantage or sexual favor from the child or program participant.
- Not physically contact a child or program participant in a way that is: unprofessional, abusive, unnecessary or excessive, that makes a child or program participant feel uncomfortable or unsafe, or in a culturally insensitive way (necessary physical contact would include attending to a child's or program participant's injuries or removing them from a dangerous situation).
- Not engage in child labor, including hiring children for domestic and other labor which is inappropriate for their age or development stage, and which interferes with their time for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.
- Not do things for children or participants taking part in Real Life Research Institute programs that are personal and which participants or children can do for themselves, including dressing or undressing, toileting, or bathing.
- Not use any technological devices, including, but not limited to, computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras, or social media to

exploit or harass children or program participants, or access child sexual exploitation material through any medium.

- Not condone or participate with children or program participants in activities that are illegal, unsafe, or abusive.
- Immediately report concerns about the safety or well-being of a child or program participant, or a possible breach of this Safeguarding Policy, in accordance with the Safeguarding Reporting Procedures.
- Speak with management about any concerns about how their words, actions, or behavior may be interpreted as a breach of this Policy.
- Act professionally with children and program participants without detracting from genuine care and compassion for them.
- Conduct risk assessments on all program interventions and processes; mitigate risks and include preventative and safeguarding systems across all functions and operations.
- Report as soon as possible any behavior that may be fraudulent, corrupt, or involve bribery through Real Life Research Institute's reporting channels.
- Report criminal behavior to the police, unless there is a good reason not to

***This list is not exhaustive nor exclusive. Employees, related personnel, and partners should avoid actions or behavior reflecting poor practice or potentially abusive behavior.*

Section Thirteen: Responding to Safeguarding Incidents

Real Life Research Institute will respond to reports of the abuse of children or program participants involved in Real Life Research Institute programs in

ways that are consistent with local laws. Responses to incidents will prioritize the interests of children or program participant survivors.

Section Fifteen: Policy Breaches and Disciplinary Measures

- Real Life Research Institute will not tolerate any breaches of this Safeguarding Policy. Breaches will lead to disciplinary action, including termination, following the outcome of investigations. References to the legal systems involved in criminal investigation under local law will be made where necessary.
- Allegations or suspicions against staff, associates, or visitors will be dealt with efficiently, fairly, and consistently, with consideration to the protection of the victims/survivors while protecting the rights of the accused. Precautionary action may be taken during investigation as a protective measure and not an assumption of guilt.
- Retaliatory action against complainants, survivors, and witnesses, including but not limited to harassment, intimidation, unfair disciplinary action, or victimization, will not be tolerated.
- Employees involved in retaliatory action will be subject to disciplinary action, including the termination of employment. Others affiliated with Real Life Research Institute will have their relationship with Real Life Research Institute terminated.
- Breaches of this Policy may lead to appropriate sanctions, including disciplinary action and possible dismissal, and termination of relations, including contracts and agreements. Where applicable, legal actions will be taken.

- The rights and intersectional factors of the suspects will be considered during an investigation to inform them of any potential false/malicious accusations.
- If, after an investigation, accusations are found to be false, no actions shall be taken against the reporter. However, appropriate sanctions will be taken against anyone who intentionally makes a false/malicious accusation.

At Real Life Research Institute, **SAFEGUARDING
is everyone's responsibility, and **VIOLATIONS**
are **NEVER TOLERATED.****

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