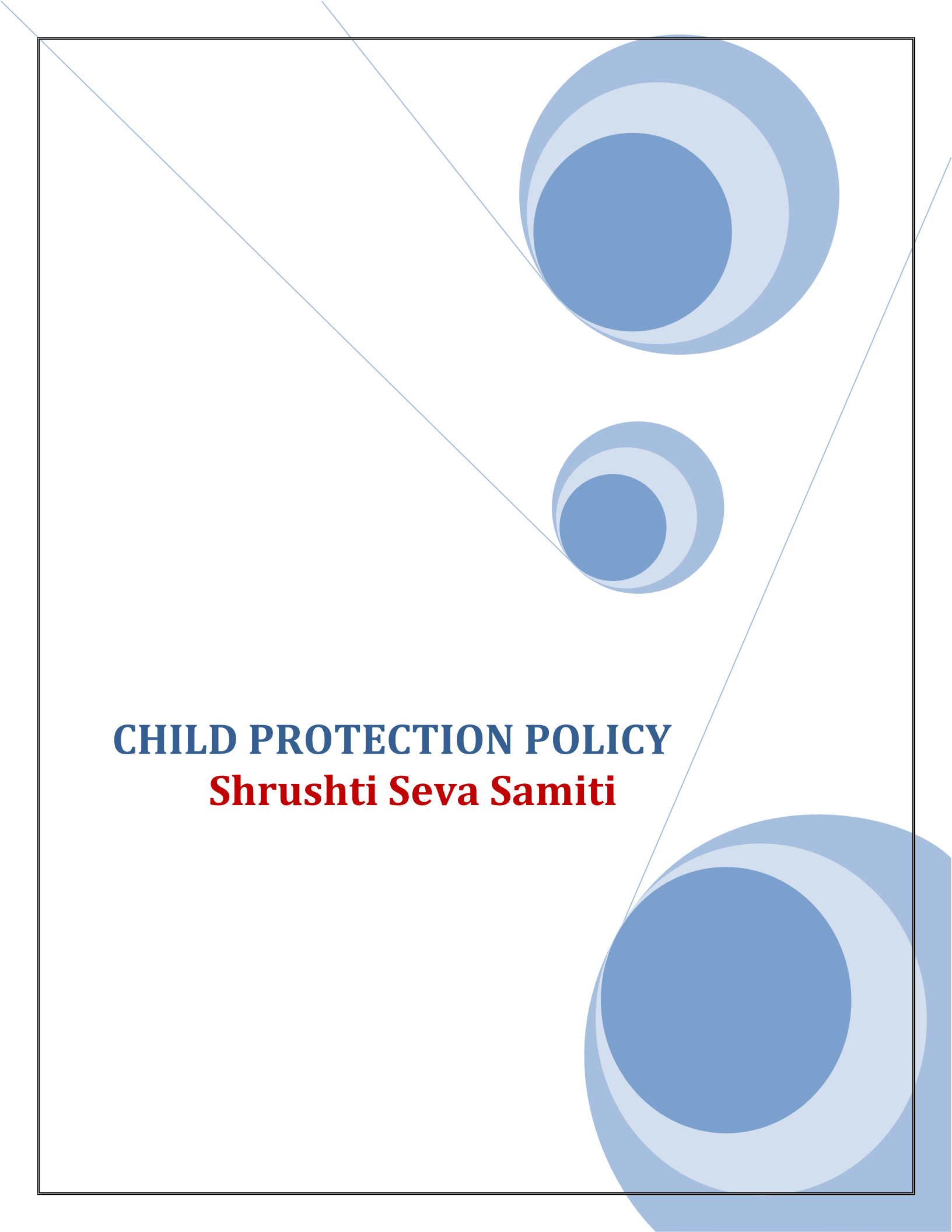




CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Shrushti Seva Samiti

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT

The very nature of our work requires of highest standards for protection and care of children in the families and communities where we are active. Enclosed is a policy statement that should be carefully read and understood by all SHRUSHTI staff and workers everywhere.

“SHRUSHTI work to promote children’s holistic development aims to strengthen family and community systems that support child protection and well being. SHRUSHTI strives to create positive environment in which children grow up amidst respect, hope and social justice. Recognizing the inherent worth of each child, SHRUSHTI accepts its responsibilities to protect children from harm, to promote children’s rights, and to insure children’s healthy development.

SHRUSHTI Child Protection Policy

Discrimination: Discrimination is unequal treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of personal characteristics such as disability or appearance or group characteristic such as ethnicity or religious orientation.

Shrushti Policy:

Shrushti will not discriminate in its environment, program, or services on the grounds of religion, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, language, sexual orientation, marital status disability, age, or political conviction.

1. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT:

Definition of Child according to CRC:

A child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

- 1.1. Shrushti Seva Samiti is committed to the rights and welfare of children in India and opposes all forms of child abuse, especially child sexual abuse and exploitation.
- 1.2. Shrushti Seva Samiti is committed to upholding the law on child rights and welfare, as outlined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and various legal statutes of the prevailing law in India

UN Article 19 –

No one should hurt you in any way. Adults should make sure that you are protected from abuse, violence and neglect. Even your parents have no right to hurt you.

UN Article 34

You have the right to be protected from sexual abuse. This means that nobody can do anything to your body that you do not want them to do, such as touching you or taking pictures of you or making you say things that you don't want to say.

- 1.3. Shrushti Seva Samiti believes that all children have a right to protection from abuse irrespective of race, social background, age, gender, skin color, disability, religion, caste or beliefs.
 - 1.4. Shrushti Seva Samiti believes that child abuse and exploitation is not acceptable in any form. Keeping silent and inaction is also wrong, if it is known that a child is being abused or exploited.
 - 1.5. Shrushti Seva Samiti believes in the importance of child protection, so that not only are children protected from abuse by Shrushti Seva Samiti members, staff, donors, and volunteers, but also that preventative measures can be made to protect the Shrushti Seva Samiti staff own integrity.
 - 1.6. Shrushti Seva Samiti believes that children have the right to participation through any form of expression (in accordance with their evolving capacities) and be heard. Therefore where possible children will also be included as stakeholders and in research and other relevant reports/evaluations.
 - 1.7. All staff and volunteers agree to this policy. It will be evaluated and reviewed every year by Shrushti Seva Samiti based on experience and evolving circumstances and law.
2. The different forms of child abuse are described by:
- 2.1.1. **Physical Abuse:** Actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury, or suffering, to a child, including deliberate or non-accidental hitting, beating, shaking, throwing, burning, drowning, suffocating or poisoning, drugging, any form of corporal punishment.
 - 2.1.2. **Mental/Emotional Abuse:** Actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioral development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection. May involve conveying to the child that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate and cause children to feel frightened, in danger and corrupted.
 - 2.1.3. Physical and emotional abuse may occur even when a parent or caretaker may not have intended to hurt the child. It may however have been the result of

physical or emotional over discipline or punishment which is inappropriate to the age of the child.

- 2.1.4. **Neglect:** The persistent or severe neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including severe weather conditions and starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

The various aspects of neglect can be further detailed as below: The failure to provide for the child's basic needs. Neglect can be physical, educational, or emotional. Physical neglect can include not providing adequate food or clothing, appropriate medical care, supervision, or proper weather protection (heat or cold). It may include abandonment. Educational neglect includes failure to provide appropriate schooling or special educational needs, allowing excessive trancies. Psychological neglect includes the lack of any emotional support and love, never attending to the child, spousal abuse, drug and alcohol abuse including allowing the child to participate in drug and alcohol use.

- 2.1.5. **Sexual Abuse:** Actual or likely exploitation of a child, representing the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate social taboos or family rules, such as but not limited to touching a child's genitals, forcing a child to watch or take part in pornography or coercing the child to have sex. It is considered abuse whether or not the child consents.

Sexual exploitation is the exchanging of money or other economic favors in return for sex. The abuser is often an adult but can be a child as well.

Child Sexual Abuse Includes

- An adult exposing his/her genitals to a child or persuading the child to do the same
- An adult touching/ fondling a child's genitals or making the child touch the adult's genitalia.
- An adult involving a child in pornography which includes exposing a child to pornographic material
- An adult having oral, vaginal or anal intercourse with a child
- Any verbal or other sexual suggestion made to a child by adult
- An adult persuading children to engage in sexual activity

Above points are some examples but sexual abuse is not limited to these points. To be considered child abuse these acts have to be committed by a person responsible for the care of a child or related to the child. If a stranger commits these acts, it would be considered sexual assault. It is considered abuse whether or not the child consents.

Sexual exploitation is the exchanging of money or other economic favors in return for sex.

3. BEHAVIOURAL PROTOCOLS:

- 3.1. Shrushti Seva Samiti expects all its staff, volunteers, patrons, and visitors to give respect and dignity to all children associated with the work of Shrushti Seva Samiti as well as children within the personal lives of those individuals connected to Shrushti Seva Samiti.
- 3.2. Shrushti Seva Samiti staff, volunteers and visitors with direct contact with projects and children must sign a statement to say that they have read the policy, will respect and abide by it and understand that action will be taken in cases where behavior is not in accordance to the policy. This will lead to disciplinary action and possible job loss for staff or dismissal of volunteers who break these protocols.
- 3.3. Permission will be required from authorized persons of Shrushti Seva Samiti, for volunteers and external visitors to take photographs or video footage of children. Authorization should be sought from the Director/CEO/Secretary and strict regulations will be implemented on the nature of how photographs are taken. These photographs and/or video will not be used for any other purpose outside Shrushti Seva Samiti without prior permission. It is advisable to take the consent of the children and share the pictures with them to the extent possible.
- 3.4. Staff, volunteers and visitors must never be alone with children who are not their own offspring in a private place that cannot be readily seen by other responsible adults.
- 3.5. Where possible and practical, the 'two - adult' rule, wherein two or more adults supervise all activities where minors or children are involved and are present at all times, should be followed. If this is not possible, Shrushti Seva Samiti staff members are encouraged to look for alternatives such as being accompanied by community members on visits to children.
- 3.6. Shrushti Seva Samiti staff, volunteers and visitors will not discipline a child in a way that is against the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This effectively means no tolerance to any form of violence against the child.
- 3.7. Shrushti Seva Samiti staff, volunteers and visitors need to be aware that they may work with children who, because of the circumstances and abuses they have experienced, may use a relationship to obtain "special attention". The adult is

always considered responsible even if a child behaves seductively. Adults should avoid being placed in a compromising or vulnerable position.

- 3.8. Inappropriate behavior toward children, including failure to follow Shrushti Seva Samiti Behavior Protocols or sexual abuse of a child is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment, volunteer/internship or board /advisory council membership.
- 3.9. Shrushti Seva Samiti staff, volunteers and visitors must be concerned about perception and appearance in their language, actions and relationships with minors and children. Shrushti Seva Samiti staff, volunteers and visitors should maintain a high standard of behavior/character in presence of children. (Example: should not use any unacceptable language in the presence of a child)
- 3.10. Shrushti Seva Samiti staff, volunteers and visitors dress appropriately and culturally sensitive when they visit children, families, communities and programs or work with children.
- 3.11. Inexperienced Shrushti Seva Samiti staff and volunteers should not try to handle children with complicated problems. (Example: children who have been sexually abused). These children should be directed to competent and reliable organisation a team or professionals with the consultation of the responsible officers.
- 3.12. Shrushti Seva Samiti staff and volunteers should seek to live up to the Shrushti Seva Samiti Mission Statement and Core Values in all relationship with others in any circumstances.

4. RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

- 4.1. Shrushti Seva Samiti staff, volunteers and visitors will be carefully and properly screened during their recruitment period, including obtaining a police check where possible or necessary.
- 4.2. Shrushti Seva Samiti staff and volunteers will be carefully and properly screened during their recruitment period which includes agreeing to sign to the Child Protection Policy and stating that there have been no previous convictions for abuse against children, violent behavior or improper and unlawful conduct.
- 4.3. Shrushti Seva Samiti will ensure that all the references of approved local candidates for work are checked, preferably by telephone, and recorded in the staff files before the new staff member is invited to take the position. This will include a verbal and

written request to the referee of whether they have any concerns as to why the candidate should be employed to work with children.

- 4.4. Shrushti Seva Samiti staff, volunteers and visitors agree to **inform the CEO/Secretary/Director** immediately if new information arises that casts doubt on the team member's trustworthiness with children. Such information would be treated as confidential and disclosed to the individual team member for appropriate action.
- 4.5. Individuals who are hired as independent contractors are notified of Shrushti's Policy and Required Standards for Child Protection and are made aware that they are expected to follow behavior protocols set out below.
- 4.6. In the best interests of children, organization will not hire anyone with a prior conviction for child abuse, paedophilia or related offences. In the event that local law prohibits this broad hiring rule, no person with a conviction for child abuse, paedophilia or related offences may be hired into any position which includes direct access to children. Shrushti Seva Samiti reserves the right not to hire an applicant if the background check reveals that the person is not suitable to work with children.

5. RESPONSES TO ALLEGATIONS OF STAFF OFFENCES

- 5.1. Shrushti Seva Samiti staff, volunteers and visitors will be encouraged to be open in discussing the potential of abuse within the organization, including during the mandatory annual child protection training.
- 5.2. Where an allegation has been made that any of Shrushti Seva Samiti staff, volunteer or visitors has abused a child, Shrushti Seva Samiti will take the appropriate action to deal with the situation.
 - 5.2.1. Where there is an allegation, first inform the CEO/Secretary/Director. If the concerned authority is the subject of the allegation, other Senior Staff / board member must be informed.
 - 5.2.2. The allegation will be kept confidential, with only those directly involved having the appropriate information.
 - 5.2.3. All details will be entered on the Shrushti's Allegation form and filed confidentially.
 - 5.2.4. Shrushti Seva Samiti staff, volunteers and visitors found to be widening the circle of confidentiality will have disciplinary action taken against them according to the rules of the sending agency. Committee members and staff will receive a written warning.

- 5.2.5. Any investigations will be kept confidential and take place under external advice and counsel.
- 5.2.6. Relationships with child welfare and legal organizations should be encouraged for accountability and support in times following an allegation.
- 5.2.7. Both child and alleged perpetrator will be treated with respect from the start of the process to the end.
- 5.2.8. Shrushti Seva Samiti will not dismiss a child's accusation of abuse without appropriate investigation, no matter who the alleged perpetrator is.
- 5.2.9. Shrushti Seva Samiti will confer with other organizations in a case where the child involved requires extra protection.
- 5.2.10. Records will be made of all facts related to the investigation and allegation, and these will be carefully and confidentially filed by the Committee. **(Refer to allegation forms)**
- 5.2.11. If a foreigner is involved, the relevant Embassy will be informed.
- 5.2.12. Shrushti Seva Samiti will designate someone to deal with the media and the police if necessary. Consideration will be made beforehand by the Committee about how the police and media will be informed/involved.

6. RESPONSES TO ALLEGATIONS OF NON-STAFF, COMMUNITY MEMBERS, FAMILY, ETC. OFFENCES

- 6.1. In order to facilitate the reporting, investigation and follow-through of all cases, Shrushti Seva Samiti will set up formal or informal support systems of related professionals and authority within their community. That is, relationships will be maintained with local police, government or non-government social services, doctors, lawyers, social workers, and teachers. All individuals should be encouraged to attend the Shrushti Seva Samiti annual child protection training sessions, as both participants as well as providers of information related to their community and particular service.
- 6.2. Whenever a staff of Shrushti Seva Samiti has a reasonable cause to believe that a child, regardless of whether served by Shrushti Seva Samiti, is being abused, that staff must report within 48 hours to the CEO/Secretary/Director, who will report immediately to local authority utilizing the same Allegation form.

7. COMMUNICATION ABOUT/TO CHILDREN

- 7.1. Shrushti Seva Samiti recognizes that the world-wide web is increasingly being used by those seeking to abuse children, and that photographs are doctored to create further abuse of children. Therefore Shrushti Seva Samiti will only post pictures of groups of children on its website, and not individuals. It will never display pictures of children in brothels or in vulnerable situations.
- 7.2. Where photographs of children are used, Shrushti Seva Samiti will take special care to protect children's identities and specific geographic location in all materials.
- 7.3. Disclosure of information about past or present abuse of children and any of the persons involved should be limited to only the people who need to know.

- 7.4. Communications about children should use pictures that are decent and respectful, not presenting them as victims. Children should be adequately clothed and poses that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive should be avoided. Language that implies a relationship of power should also be avoided.
- 7.5. Individuals or organizations requesting the use of Shrushti Seva Samiti resources such as videos or photographs should be required to sign an agreement with the appropriate Shrushti Seva Samiti entity as to the proper use of such materials. The agreement should include a statement that any use of such materials for purposes other than what is agreed upon could subject the borrowing individual or organization to legal action. Furthermore, failure to adhere to the agreed upon use of the material will result in the immediate termination of Shrushti's permission to use the subject materials and/or require immediate return of all materials provided by Shrushti Seva Samiti as well as any copies of such materials.
- 7.6. Private correspondence with individual children by volunteers is discouraged. When reasonable ground exists, all correspondence with a child by the Shrushti Seva Samiti volunteers is reviewed for inappropriate or suggestive comments, requests or obscenities. In the event of inappropriate correspondence being discovered, Shrushti Seva Samiti reserves the right to sever the volunteer relationship.

8. TRAINING, EVALUATION & MONITORING

- 8.1. Shrushti Seva Samiti will implement training to ensure that all staff, volunteers and visitors understand the content of this Child Protection Policy before signing their commitment. This training will be provided as mandatory participation by all new member and staff, a session led by Shrushti Seva Samiti team members. The scope of the training will include but not limit itself to Definitions of child abuse, characteristics, causes, handling of disclosure, reporting systems, laws, local multi-disciplinary specific measures open to Shrushti Programme's.
- 8.2. Shrushti Seva Samiti will be committed to the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of child protection procedures and behavior protocols. Annual staff evaluations will include the items of active listening, activities and behavior that empower clients, assertiveness when advocating for a client, and basic knowledge on child protection issues.
- 8.3. Once a year there will be an opportunity for all members, staff and volunteers to partake in a self appraisal and peer appraisal to monitor the behavior of each.
- 8.4. Should there be any concerns, these should be raised with the CEO/Secretary /Director.

9. DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT

To be signed by all Shrushti Seva Samiti staff, volunteer visitors and partner organizations. A copy will be kept on file in the Shrushti Seva Samiti office.

I declare that:

1. I have read and understand the Shrushti Seva Samiti Child Protection Policy and have attended/will attend the [date] child protection training.
2. I will work within the procedure as laid out in the Shrushti Seva Samiti Child Protection Policy.
3. I have not been accused or convicted of any offence involving physical or sexual abuse of children or young people.
4. I understand that if a complaint is brought against me regarding the abuse of children while engaged in Shrushti Seva Samiti activities, the allegation will be thoroughly investigated in cooperation with the appropriate authorities.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Allegation Form

SHRUSHTI ALLEGATION FORM

REQUEST FOR AN INVESTIGATION INTO SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Name of Child : _____ Age: _____ Gender: _____ (M/F)

Address: _____

Name of Parents : _____ Contact No.: _____

Address: _____

Employee Name: _____ Age: _____ Gender: _____ Designation: _____

Nature of extent of suspected abuse:

Previous injuries, events, and symptoms of note

Identity and address of alleged offender (if known)

Date and signature of staff: _____