



EFJCA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



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1. Mission of the EFJCA

The EFJCA is a legal entity and the officially recognized European network of Family Justice Centers and related multidisciplinary models in Europe. Since 2022 the EFJCA is also officially recognized by the European Commission as European network and receives an operating grant within the CERV Operating Grants Framework Partnerships. The EFJCA promotes the Family Justice Center model and related multidisciplinary models and provides a central platform for all its members and partners. As an umbrella organisation the Alliance is strengthening knowledge, offering new insights and tools on general and specific themes within gender-based violence and promotes mutual sharing of information, experiences and good practices among its members. The goal of the European Alliance is the development and implementation of a strong and effective multidisciplinary approach of gender-based violence and domestic violence and creating sustainable multidisciplinary (FJC) centers in Europe. A safe place for victims/survivors with a focus on empowering them.

A Family Justice Center is multidisciplinary service center where public and private agencies assign staff members to, on a full-time or part-time basis, to provide services to victims of gender-based violence & domestic violence, and their families from one location.

The overall objectives of the EFJCA are:

- Improving and strengthening the capacity of the FJC's and related multidisciplinary models as strong, dynamic, and sustainable models in Europe
- Promoting and supporting the start-up of new FJC's and related multidisciplinary models in Europe
- Providing and improving knowledge and teaching professionals the skills and use of evidence-based tools to tackle gender-based violence
- Creating strong & sustainable cross-professional & -country networks
- Raising awareness among policymakers, governments, civil society
- Providing FJC's and related multidisciplinary models with the knowledge and tools to maintain high quality standards in line with the EU values as laid down in Art. 2 of the Treaty on European Union and the EU Charter of fundamental rights.
- Involving Voices (victims & survivors) in the work of the EFJCA, the FJC's and related multidisciplinary models.

2. EFJCA Child Protection Policy

Child Protection is the responsibility that organisations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children, that is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organisation has about children's safety within the communities in which they work, are reported to the appropriate authorities. (Keeping children safe).

The EFJCA is committed to the rights, safety and protection of children and acknowledges the EFJCA's responsibility to make sure that the activities of the EFJCA do not put any risk on children's well-being or harm children in anyway. The EFJCA doesn't work directly with children, the member organisations may have direct contact with children and youngsters. This includes a task for the EFJCA to ensure the safety of children by providing a policy in safeguarding children towards the EFJCA-members.

The EFJCA children's protection policy is written in accordance with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and builds international child Protection standards of Keeping Children Safe and the good practices established by partner organizations and networks in Europe.

Key commitments:

- Protection children is the business of all EFJCA cooperators and members
- Children should always be treated with respect, regardless of their sex, ethnic, social origin, language, religious beliefs, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation,...
- All children have the absolute right to be free from any form of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation
- Children are most at risk from those people they know and often trust. Adults engaged in positions of trust towards children must therefore exercise the highest levels of integrity and good practice.
- Professionals working or in contact with children have an obligation to ensure that their activities don't put children at risk and must be aware that children are vulnerable. This means that cooperators and members don't represent a risk to children and that activities and policies are developed in ways that promote the protection of children

3. Legal Background

The EFJCA child Protection policy is based on:

- Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Istanbul Convention
- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU
- European Convention on Human Rights
- EU Victims' Directive (Directive 2012/29/EU)
- Keeping Children Safe International Protection Standards
- EU Directive on combating sexual abuse & sexual exploitation of children & child pornography (Directive 2011/92/EU).

4. Definitions

Child

Means every human being under the age of 18 in accordance with Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Child Abuse

The EFJCA defines child abuse and neglect (also referred to generally as child maltreatment) as all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation that results in harm, potential for harm to the child's health, survival development or dignity in the context of a relationship or responsibility, trust or power.

The EFJCA recognizes the definition of harm as stated in the "Keeping Children Safe International Protection Standards":

- **Physical abuse:** actual or potential physical harm perpetrated by another person, adult or child. it may involve hitting, shaking, poisoning, drowning and burning. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or caretaker fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.
- **Sexual abuse:** forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice in consenting to. This may include, but is not limited to, rape, oral sex, penetration, or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and

touching. It may also include involving children in looking at, or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities and encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

- **Child sexual exploitation:** a form of sexual abuse that involves children being engaged in any sexual activity in exchange for money, gifts, food, accommodation, affection, status, or anything else that they or their family needs. It usually involves a child being manipulated or coerced, which may involve befriending children, gaining their trust, and subjecting them to drugs and alcohol. The abusive relationship between victim and perpetrator involves an imbalance of power where the victim's options are limited. It is a form of abuse that can be misunderstood by children and adults as consensual.

Child sexual exploitation manifests in different ways. It can involve an older perpetrator exercising financial, emotional or physical control over a young person. It can involve peers manipulating or forcing victims into sexual activity, sometimes within gangs and in gang-affected neighborhoods. It may also involve opportunistic or organized networks of perpetrators who profit financially from trafficking young victims between different locations to engage in sexual activity with multiple men.

- **Neglect and negligent treatment:** allowing for context, resources and circumstances, neglect and negligent treatment refers to a persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of a child's healthy physical, spiritual, moral and mental development. It includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm and provide for nutrition, shelter and safe living/working conditions. It may also involve maternal neglect during pregnancy as a result of drug or alcohol misuse and the neglect and ill treatment of a disabled child.
- **Emotional abuse:** persistent emotional maltreatment that impacts on a child's emotional development. Emotionally abusive acts include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, bullying (including cyber bullying), and threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.
- **Commercial exploitation:** exploiting a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional Development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labour.

5. Commitment of the EFJCA

Although the EFJCA doesn't work directly with children, the EFJCA recognizes her responsibility towards children in all her activities and the out-comes of those activities. Also, the EFJCA recognizes the responsibility to have a clear statement towards staff and EFJCA-members in the policy to safeguard children from any harm.

This includes:

- **Raising Awareness:** the EFJCA has a strong accountability in awareness raising about Protection children and protect them from any harm, towards the members of the EFJCA network.
- **Prevention:** in her activities, the EFJCA embed the Protection from children to protect children from any harm.
- **Responsibility:** the staff of the EFJCA have a responsibility to report harm to children and embed this in her actions

This policy applies to all the EFJCA staff and board members, supporting members, focal points, advisors and trainers. Preventing harm to children is a commitment all persons active in the EFJCA structure make whilst at work and outside of work.

New team members are required to confirm that they have read, understood, and agree to this Child Protection Policy.

The activities of the EFJCA are targeted towards adults, from organisations and experts from various sectors: police, justice, women's aid, victim services, child advocacy, perpetrator programs, health and mental health sector, social services, personal support projects, youth services, income support and employment services, municipal services, research centers, universities, local authorities, national authorities, ... The EFJCA is aware that the contents are only for adult audiences, and therefore strongly encourages and aim to ensure to the best of our abilities that children are not confronted with any contents that have not been adapted for their age groups.

6. Child Protection policy towards the EFJCA members

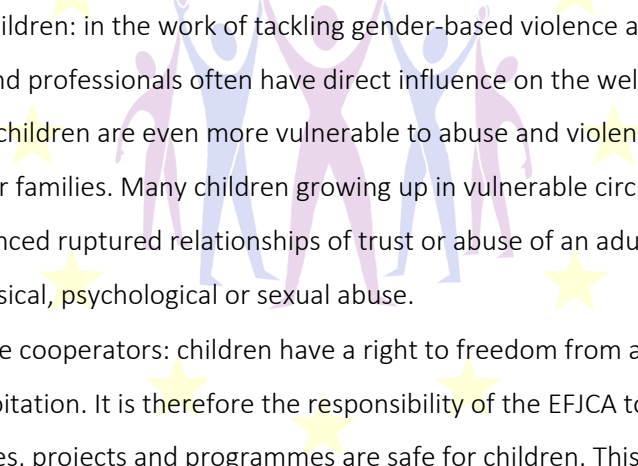
The members of the EFJCA are:

- Family Justice Centers
- Related multidisciplinary models
- Organisations (NGO's and governmental) and professionals subscribing to the guiding principles, mission and vision of the EFJCA

For the purpose of child protection policy, a member did subscribe the membership form as organisation or as individual.

Some of the members have direct contact with children in the work at their center, and they operate within the framework of their own protection policies, and national laws.

The EFJCA Protection policy wants to ensure:

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- Protection of children: in the work of tackling gender-based violence and domestic violence, organisations and professionals often have direct influence on the well-being and safety of children. Some children are even more vulnerable to abuse and violence due to the situation of their families. Many children growing up in vulnerable circumstances have already experienced ruptured relationships of trust or abuse of an adult-child relationship in the form of physical, psychological or sexual abuse.
 - Protection of the cooperators: children have a right to freedom from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation. It is therefore the responsibility of the EFJCA to ensure that all its activities, policies, projects and programmes are safe for children. This means that the activities of the EFJCA do not represent a risk to children and that programmes, policies and practices are designed and developed with the protection of children in mind.
 - Protection of the organisation: organisations working with violence may come in contact with vulnerable children, which puts the responsibility towards the organisation to be clear and open in the policy, attitude and comportment.

By the lack of child protection policy towards the affiliation process for FJCs and related centers, the EFJCA will ask to subscribe the EFJCA child protection policy and demonstrate their commitment to developing their own child protection policy and procedures within their local context and legal framework.

7. Code of Conduct and Training of Staff

All EFJCA staff and board members, supporting members, focal points, advisors and trainers are committed to treating children with respect and without any prejudice or discrimination and protecting children from abuse and exploitation which is laid down in the EFJCA Child Safe Code of Conduct. This Code of Conduct is outlining expected behaviors, ethical standards and behaviors that are unacceptable, when interacting with children.

The Child Safe Code of Conduct must:

- Identify to staff, supporting members, advisors, trainers and volunteers the expected behavioral standards for engaging with children in the organisation. It should set a high standard of conduct for the protection and wellbeing of children.
- Cover conduct in both the physical and online environments.
- Be easy for people to access and understand.
- Be covered in induction training for all staff, supporting members, advisors, trainers and volunteers.
- Link to relevant legislation, the EFJCA's Child Protection Policy and related EU policies and procedures, including those for receiving and responding to complaints and concerns and for reporting to external authorities.

Training of new EFJCA staff members and/or supporting members, trainers, advisors and volunteers is mandatory to ensure that they adhere to the EFJCA Child Protection Policy. This training will focus on behavioral aspects and their roles and responsibilities in working with children.

As already mentioned in chapter 5 the EFJCA itself doesn't work normally directly with children, but some of the EFJCA members do work within their services direct with children. Although it is the responsibility of each individual member of the EFJCA that is in direct contact with children to have a Child Protection Policy, the EFJCA offers her members a training on Child Protection Policy.

8. Risk Assessment

Members of the EFJCA are encouraged to develop and implement activities and programmes that are safe. Issues like do all the staff and volunteers at the center have appropriate training, like safeguarding training, have the necessary vetting and barrier checks been undertaken, is everyone clear about their own roles and responsibilities and, crucially, what to do if they have any concerns about a child's welfare? Risk assessments contributes that developed and implemented activities and programmes are safe and risk mitigation strategies will minimize the risk to children.

9. Communication about the child protection policy

The EFJCA will clearly connect towards staff and members about the Protection policy and promote this policy on the website.

The child protection policy will be embedded in the affiliation process towards Family Justice Centers and co-related centers.

In the Memorandum of Understanding the EFJCA and the members subscribe, the child protection policy will be included.

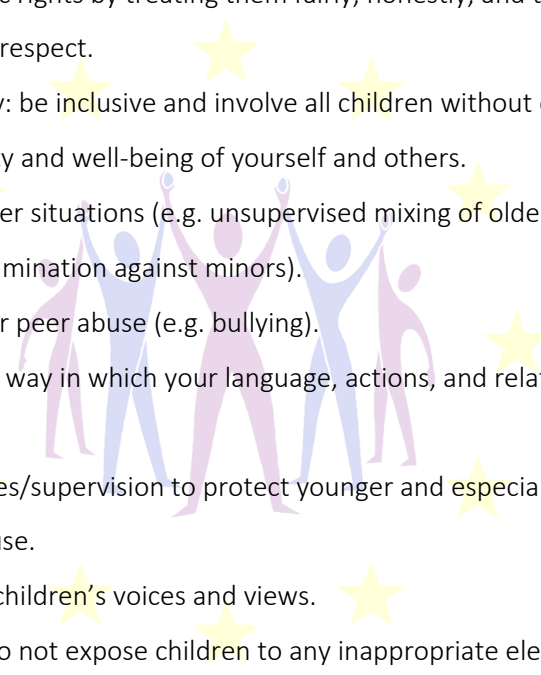
10. Publications, social media and use of images

Concerning the use of images, stories, and other content, the EFJCA commits to the following guidelines:

- Images of children are not used in publications or online platforms, unless there is consent by the child and their custodian (depending on the legislation, age of the child must be taken into consideration whether the child can give consent), with a clear explanation of the use of the image, the purpose and the audience.
- Children's images never may be used in a way that is exploitative or harmful to d child's dignity.
- Details attached to images will omit any information that could allow the child to be traced to their home or community.
- Sensitive content created for awareness-raising purposes will contain content warnings (e.g. social media campaigns on consent).

- Right to one's own picture will be respected in accordance with the Dutch legislation and GDPR regulation.
- Interviews of children requires basic principles to ensure their dignity and their rights. This includes an informed consent, which means explaining what subjects are likely to be covered in the interview and clarifying the child's right to withdraw their consent at any point. It must be clear before the interview that the child only has to talk if they are comfortable doing so.

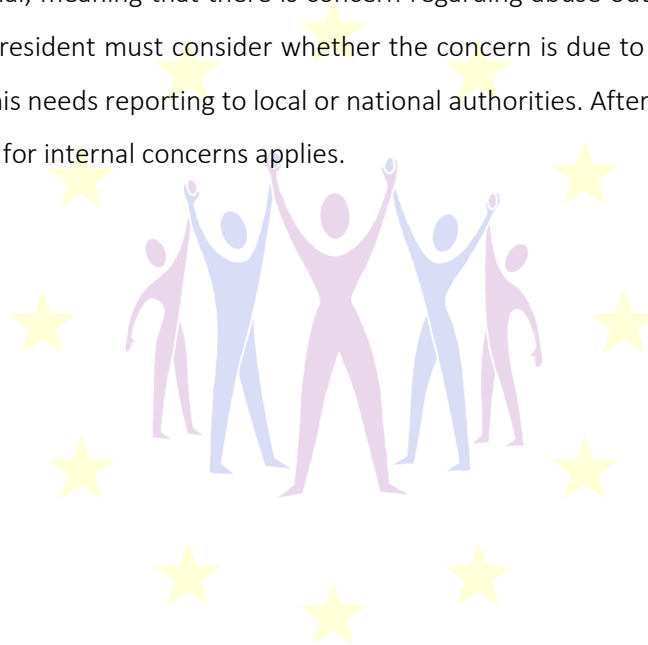
11. Recommendations towards the EFJCA cooperators, board members and member organisations

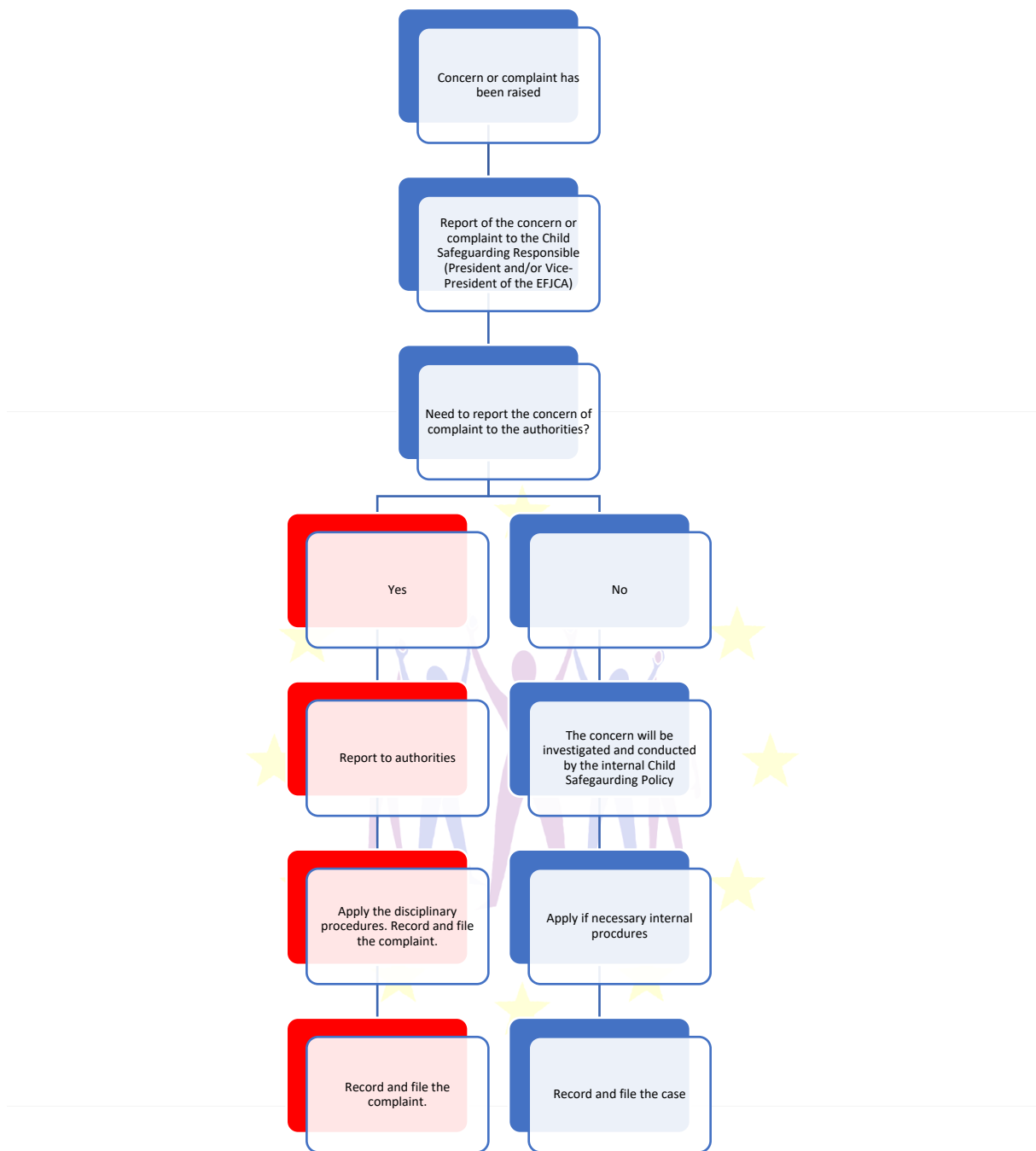
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- Respect the others' basic rights by treating them fairly, honestly, and tactfully, and by treating people with dignity and respect.
 - Treat all children equally: be inclusive and involve all children without discrimination.
 - Protect the health, safety and well-being of yourself and others.
 - Be aware of high-risk peer situations (e.g. unsupervised mixing of older and younger children and possibilities of discrimination against minors).
 - Be aware of potential for peer abuse (e.g. bullying).
 - Be concerned about the way in which your language, actions, and relationships with children could be perceived.
 - Develop special measures/supervision to protect younger and especially vulnerable children from peer and adult abuse.
 - Encourage and respect children's voices and views.
 - Limit access to and/or do not expose children to any inappropriate electronic material.
 - Respect the confidentiality of children's personal information at all times.
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- Immediately report any concerns, suspicions, incidents or allegations of actual or potential Protection concerns or any breaches of this child Protection policy, to the president of the vice-president.

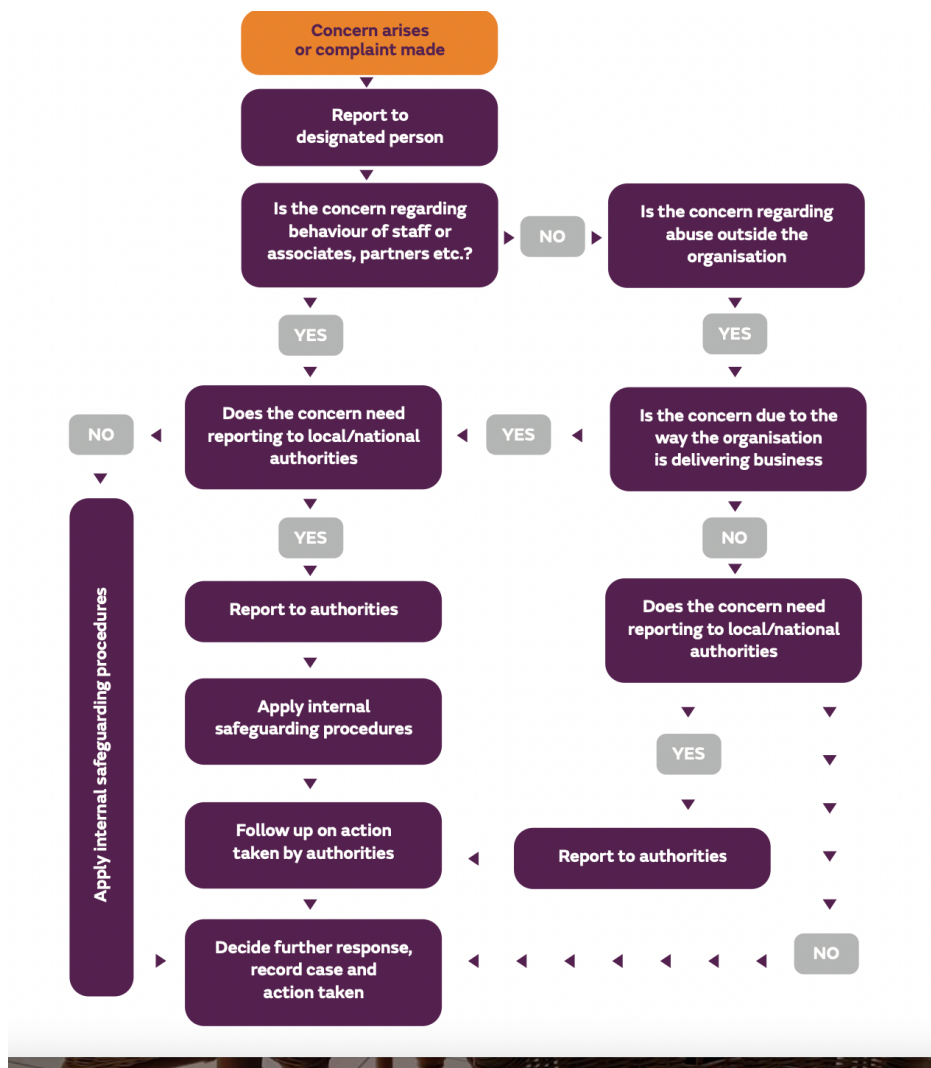
12. Reporting procedures

All witnessed, suspected or alleged violations of the EFJCA Child Protection Policy will be immediately reported to the President or Vice-president. The president or the vice-president will bring the report to the executive board. These reporting will be stored securely with access limited to the executive board. If the concern regards the behavior of staff, volunteers, a board member, the president or vice-president must consider whether to report the incident to the local/national authorities. If this is not necessary, the internal safeguarding procedure needs to be applied. In case of a report to relevant authorities, the president or vice-president must follow up on actions taken. Additionally, they need to decide on further responses and record the case.

If the concern is external, meaning that there is concern regarding abuse outside the organisation, the president or vice-president must consider whether the concern is due to the EFJCA's work and then decide whether this needs reporting to local or national authorities. After these considerations, the same procedure as for internal concerns applies.







Source: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/standards_child_protection_kcsc_en_1.pdf

13. Reviewing the EFJCA Child Protection Policy

The EFJCA Child Protection Policy will be reviewed, assessed and if applicable updated every 2 years, in accordance with the existing Dutch legislation and EU policies on the topic of Child Protection. In case there's a change in the Dutch law in relation to child protection and concerns the EFJCA work and it's members, this policy will be immediately adjusted to the changes.

Contact: board@efjca.eu, Phone number: + 31 (0)6 212 92 799
EFJCA, Boomkensdiep 25, 8032 XZ Zwolle, The Netherlands