

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY – SPECCHIO MAGICO

Specchio Magico Cooperativa Sociale Onlus (SM) – Child Safeguarding Policy

SM pursues the objective of prevention, child protection and safeguarding against abuse and maltreatment. It promotes the rights of children without any form of discrimination, drawing inspiration from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Italian Constitution.

SM is a member of ISPCAN (International Society for Prevention against Child Abuse and Neglect), Keeping Children Safe, and CISMAI (Italian Coordination Centre of Services Against Child Abuse and Neglect).

SM is involved in primary prevention initiatives at schools and local communities. It collaborates actively and directly with institutions at the local, national, and European levels. It also collaborates with national and international networks to enhance and improve regulatory frameworks that best ensure, promote, and support the rights of girls, boys, and adolescents in their respective contexts, and not just there.

SM is the promoter and signatory of the **Memorandum of Understanding for the protection of children victims of abuse and/or maltreatment**. The signatories are: Prefecture of Lecco, Public Prosecutor's Office of Lecco, Lecco Police Headquarters, Juvenile Court, Ordinary Court, Law Enforcement Agencies, ATS Lecco, ASST Lecco, Local Child Protections Agencies, Council of Mayor Representatives, Joint Management Centres, District Areas. This Memorandum of Understanding entails specific and operational local centres, as well as centres dedicated to the inter-institutional collaboration. This Memorandum of Understanding inspires the fulfilments and actions related to Prevention, Protection, and Reporting in particular, as well as Training and Promotion of the Rights of Children.

Goals

Our Child Protection Policy:

- Considers the prevention, protection, and promotion of the rights of children a priority;
- Considers the protections of confidentiality as both a regulatory requirement and a quality standard in potentially sensitive situations;
- Promotes a kind, respectful, and balanced approach in its services, projects, actions, and collaborations, ensuring appropriate proximity to its users, either underage or not;
- Commits to respecting the rights of the people involved in its activities, including children and others, as well as its members, operators, employees, partners, and collaborators, as a foundational value;
- Respects points of view, voices, and needs, facilitating their emergence through a concrete, functional, non-invasive, and protective advocacy approach, in order to enhance the independent activation and not to harm any individual right
- Advocates for the well-being of children across all professional contexts in which SM is involved;
- Advocates for the principles of this Policy with its partners, stakeholders, and clients;

The SM's Child Safeguarding Policy is accompanied by a code of conduct adopted by all the professionals involved and signed annually.

Child Abuse and Maltreatment

SM adopts the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as its primary document, alongside a series of policies related to the ISPCAN (International Society for Prevention against Child Abuse and Neglect) network for the international dimension, and the Keeping Children Safe standards, of which it is a member, as well as the Italian Coordination Centre of Services Against Child Abuse and Neglect (CISMAI) for the national dimension.

In relation to the classification of the phenomenon of child abuse and maltreatment, SM adopts the international and national definitions referable to World Perspective (WHO/ISPCAN) and the Second National Survey on the maltreatment of children and adolescents in Italy conducted by CISMAI – Terre des Hommes in 2021 and subsequent editions (Appendix 2).

PROTOCOL AND INFORMATION CIRCULAR

Specchio Magico Cooperativa Sociale Onlus is a signatory of the Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of prevention strategies and integrated interventions against child and adolescent abuse, maltreatment, and violence towards children and adolescents.

In this regard, Specchio Magico requires all collaborators to sign an Ethical Code of behaviour outlined in this document and named “Protocol and Information Circular”.

Crimes against Individual Dignity

The respect for the individual is a fundamental element in the activities carried out by Specchio Magico. To achieve this goal, the cooperative has selected and trained personnel capable of providing professional, personalized, and ethically responsible services to users and any collaborator. The personnel in charge of managing the services offered are bound to strictly adhere to the following rules of good practice and ethical conduct.

All the collaborators of the cooperative, especially those who have any form of contact with the users of the service, managed either directly or indirectly by the cooperative, must show in their behaviour the utmost correctness and professionalism. They should avoid adopting attitudes of excessive personal familiarity (or excessive contact) or any kind of behaviour that could be misinterpreted.

In particular, Specchio Magico has established and reiterated to all its collaborators that it is strictly forbidden, and hence severely punished, to:

- engage in sexual relationships or contacts that are not explicitly related to fully consenting adults (or even with a mere implicit and/or explicit sexual reference and/or evocative nature), or with all the collaborators and/or with the users of the cooperative, whether they are children or adults (if the latter are not consenting), in any form, including direct and physical interaction as well as through the use of devices, social networks, and/or any other form of online contact;
- directly and/or indirectly force users and collaborators into work-related performances or sexually evocative situations, or into begging or any performances that involve exploitation, or even the simple degradation of image, in any way the same can be interpreted;
- directly or indirectly induce users, especially those younger than eighteen, into prostitution (in any form the same may be expressed and/or understood), or facilitate or exploit their prostitution, or any direct or indirect form thereof;

- engage in sexual intercourses (of any type and/or intensity, even virtually or evocatively) with a child aged between fourteen and eighteen, in exchange for money, or other economic or material benefits, or with adult users and/or collaborators of the cooperative who are not fully consenting or capable;
- directly and/or indirectly create child pornography/pornography displays, or produce child pornography/pornography material using users and/or collaborators, or induce the same to participate in such displays of any kind and/or intensity;
- distribute, disclose, disseminate, or advertise by any means, including electronically, child pornography/pornography or sexually explicit material (of any type and/or intensity), or distribute or disseminate news or information aimed at soliciting or sexually exploiting users and/or collaborators;
- obtain or possess child pornographic/pornographic (or of an explicit and implicit sexual nature) material, even when the material represents virtual images, especially if it involves children (or images of children).

The employment relationship with individuals who fail to adhere to the outlined prescriptions and subsequent principles will be promptly terminated, with potential civil and criminal consequences based on the specific circumstances.

SM protects its organization and staff from any potential abuse and transgression.

The SM's staff is required to comply with the following principles:

- Treat children with respect, always recognizing them as rights holders;
- Actively advocate for the affirmation and protection of the children's rights;
- Respect the various stages, manifestations, and contexts of child development;
- Respect and embrace all specificities as representative and identity dimensions, rather than as differences;
- Promote the enhancement of the children's thoughts, words, expression, and growth experiences;
- Promote the information and education of children about their rights;
- Promote the creation of opportunities for the enhancement of the children's talents, abilities, and potentialities;
- Promote the creation of a positive and comfortable experience within SM's services.
- Take care of environments and contexts, ensuring their safety and well-being;
- Innovate educational processes through constant training and updating ensuring the highest possible quality in professional terms;
- Accompany the growth and awareness of one's behaviour by refraining from using corporal punishment or harmful punitive measures for any reason;
- Assume a welcoming, inclusive, patient, and professional attitude towards any situation that may present;
- Adopt a proactive, welcoming, respectful, and polite language in every context;
- Constantly protect the privacy of children in every situation and/or circumstance

SM adopts a specific Policy for the protection of sensitive data through a dedicated Privacy Protection regulation aimed at employees, internal and external collaborators, suppliers, and users of its services.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

SM adopts a recruitment practice that complies with a specific procedural approach, involving initial guidance and support for potential candidates. This occurs after an initial selection process, thus facilitating a detailed, operational, concrete, and contextualized mutual understanding.

The initial selection process consists of an exploratory interview, evaluating the candidate's curriculum vitae and qualifications (a degree program in line with SM's Mission is essential). Additionally, specific references are obtained from previous experiences as indicated by the candidate in their curriculum vitae and self-application, and/or initial selection procedures.

The exploratory interview is always conducted by a senior figure of the cooperative, aimed at understanding skills, experiences, references, and attitudes, as well as sharing SM's non-negotiable principles.

In the first phase, the selected profile works alongside experienced colleagues for an agreed-upon period, engaging in contexts that assess their approach and competence, and their alignment with the required professional and ethical standards.

After this initial guidance and support phase, the selected profile enters SM's training programs and subsequently and/or simultaneously integrates into work responsibilities.

Periodically, each professional and collaborator participates in service/project/intervention or general meetings, where comprehensive and specific evaluations on the activities and the personnel involved take place. The constantly promoted emphasis on capacity building and the moments of team collaboration, intervision, and supervision serve as strong safeguards for the organization, its users, and its employees. This approach is rooted in a burnout prevention logic.

The SM's staff continually receives targeted training on technical aspects related to children's rights and Policy-related topics.

Specific training related to abuse and maltreatment is promoted by SM, based on the types of services and projects activated, both internally and externally. SM also fosters awareness and sensitivity towards the territory on Policy-related matters at a local, regional, national, community, and international level.

SM heavily invests in training and in the well-being of its staff to prevent the burnout and enhance skill proficiency. The organization strongly believes in the operational role of its professionals.

PROTECTION AND REPORTING

In terms of Protection and Reporting, SM refers to the **Memorandum of Understanding for the protection of children victims of abuse and/or maltreatment** of the Province of Lecco.

The protection and reporting procedures, and their guiding principles, are briefly outlined as follows:

- Children are always informed of their rights and are protected from potentially critical situations;
- All projects/services/interventions endorse and promote a culture based on non-violence in all its forms and manifestations, considering them unacceptable under any circumstances;
- Children are appropriately empowered to play a leading role in the protection, disclosure, and reporting process;
- All procedures involving children directly are proposed in simple and understandable language. SM is trained to communicate with children constantly and in a specific manner;
- Each member of the SM staff is committed to acting as a reference adult and is engaged accordingly;
- In the specific cases outlined below, each staff member is required to report immediately to their coordinator or directly to a member of the Board of Directors;
- SM Board of Directors is directly responsible for managing the reports and the necessary subsequent actions. Namely, the operator reports internally and promptly; the mode of reporting to the competent authorities is defined.

Reporting is carried out directly or in support of other entities/authorities, based on specific competence, in the following situations:

- Detection and assessment of any suspected or confirmed abuse;
- Whenever an operator is a direct witness or suspects a potential harmful situation;
- Whenever an operator receives a report from external partners and collaborators;
- Whenever an operator, either directly or indirectly, receives a direct testimony, narration, or disclosure by a child;

When a child discloses a situation of harm or abuse falling within the definitions of this Policy, the following steps are to be followed:

- Respond with confidentiality, utmost seriousness, and consideration for what has been received;
- Report immediately to the supervisor, manager, or a higher level of Management or Direction;
- Listen to the child respecting their developmental stage, age, context of reference, as well as their cognitive, language, relational, and social competencies.
- Inform the child about the use of their witness in subsequent phases.

For the purpose of conducting testimonial interviews, SM resorts to appropriately trained and experienced professionals who serve as points of reference. These experts are duly appointed as Judicial Police Auxiliary Officers at the local level. Each situation falling within these guidelines must involve the designated professionals and, where possible, refer to the dedicated internal team at SM.

If the suspect/accused is an internal member of the organization, the report must be submitted to the Board of Directors (CDA) as indicated. If specific management levels are involved, the report should be submitted to another CDA member, the General Director, or the President.

SM and its staff commit to:

- Protecting the child and providing all necessary support within their competence, facilitating external support processes;
- Protecting and supporting the reference context of the child if not directly involved;
- Protecting the person who discovered the abuse;
- Avoiding any contact between the accused person and the involved children;
- Taking appropriate measures based on the decisions of the competent authorities.

MONITORING AND REVISION

SM's Child Safeguarding Policy is constantly updated in response to new legislative provisions and new internally adopted protocols or procedures.

The policy is subject to monitoring and revision by SM's dedicated team for prevention, protection, and safeguarding projects and services on an annual basis.