

Singapore Scout Association Safe from Harm Policy and Framework (DRAFT)

Prepared by David Wong and Anbarasan Thuraimanikum
for SSA Safe From Harm Taskforce

Under the advisory of Malcolm Tan

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Safe From Harm Policy and Framework

Aim

The aim of this paper is to articulate the Safe from Harm policy for Singapore Scout Association and a corresponding framework to create and maintain a safe environment for our Youth Members in Scouting.

Introduction

The World Safe From Harm Policy was adopted by the World Scout Conference in 2017. It is a cumulation of work since the conference adoption of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Youth in 1990 and resolution 'Keeping Scouts Safe from Harm' in 2002.

The Singapore Scout Association has always been working on measures and guidelines to ensure a safe Scouting environment for our Youths. However, we do not have a unified Safe from Harm(SFH) or Youth Protection policy that encapsulates all aspects of harms and the prevention thereof. It is thus an opportune time to have a universal SFH policy to enhance our existing policies and guidelines with the aim of an integrated approach to keep our members out of harm's way.

Thus, Safe from Harm is a set of actions designed to make sure that every person involved in Scouting is responsible and committed to protect our youth members, so everyone can feel safe, at any time.

Principal Considerations

1. Holistic Approach
2. Effectiveness
3. Ease of Implementation

Statement of Policy

1. The Singapore Scout Association has an overarching duty of care to Youth Members to provide a safe environment and protection from harm. This is achieved through institutional policies, regulations and guidelines.
2. All Adults Members are accountable in fulfilling that specific responsibility on behalf of the Association at all times. Commissioners have the added responsibility of ensuring such policies and regulations are adequate, updated and implemented in their area of work.
3. The Association is committed to an environment of ZERO TOLERANCE toward bullying, neglect and emotional, physical, psychological or sexual abuse of any kind.
4. When an incident does occur, our absolute priority is to ensure the immediate safety and welfare of the Youth.
5. All Adults must report any conduct directly seen or suspected that does not comply with this Policy and or the SSA Code of Conduct. Without fail, Adults must report immediately any disclosure, allegation or suspicion of abuse of Youth in accordance with this Policy and in the manner specifically required by law and the authority under which the group is formed.
6. Youth are to be educated in SSA SFH Framework through a age-appropriate programme and are encouraged to report any conduct that does not comply with this Policy. They are

also to be regularly reminded through the Youth program of their rights to feel safe and what action they can take if they do not feel safe.

7. Responding to incidences of harm and allegations of abuse must be undertaken with the utmost sensitivity and confidentiality.

Definitions

Harm - This term refers to any detrimental effect on a persons' physical, emotional or psychological wellbeing and integrity.

Abuse - This term is used to describe a range of ways in which maltreatment can be inflicted on Youthren and young people.

Abuse can be categorized into different typologies such as physical, psychological, emotional and take various forms such as bullying, neglect, sexual abuse or exploitation.

Generally, "abuse" consists of anything which individuals or institutions do, or fail to do, which directly or indirectly harms Youth or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.

Adults - This refers to all Adult Members of SSA and shall also include any other Adults who are involved on a adhoc or contract basis.

Youths - This refers to all Youth Members of SSA. I.e. Cub Scout, Scout, Venture Scout and Rover Scout. This shall also include any other young persons who are involved in a programme organised by SSA. E.g. International Campers for Singapore International Jamboree, Red Cross Youths participating in National Patrol Camp.

Key Harms and Abuses

1. Physical Injuries

This occurs when Youth are injured while involved in activities and events organised as part of the Scout Youth Programme. Such injuries may due to insufficient risk control measures or the lack of it, or simply due to personal negligence. An injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures

2. Physical Abuse

This occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a Youth. The abuse can take the form of (but is not limited to) slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, throwing, burning, biting, poisoning, shoving, pushing, holding or grabbing. An injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures. Physical abuse may leave no physical injury. This abuse can also be the result of 'Hazing' (the practice of rituals and other activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group).

Additionally, physical abuse can be a single incident or a number of different incidents that take place over time. The 'level of harm' occasioned is not necessarily relevant to determining that physical abuse has occurred, rather, that harm has or has not occurred. For harm to be 'significant' the detrimental effect on a Youth's wellbeing must be substantial or serious and be demonstrated through the Youth's presentation, functioning or behaviour.

3. Emotional Abuse

This occurs when a Youth is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats. The abuse can involve name calling, being put down or continual coldness from a person to the extent where the behaviour of the Youth is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of impairment (this can include the effects of bullying). It also includes exclusion or bullying through social media.

4. Sexual Abuse

This occurs when a Youth is used by a person (being either an Adult, or another Youth or adolescent) for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification. These can be contact or non-contact acts, including grooming by perpetrators, inappropriate touching, penetrative abuse, and exposure to pornography, accessing pornography, the retention of pornography or involving a Youth in the making or sending of pornography.

5. Grooming

This occurs when communication or conduct is linked to facilitating the involvement of a Youth in sexual behaviour with an Adult. Youth are particularly accessible through 'Social media'. Indicators of 'grooming' include but are not limited to:

- Developing special relationships with, favouring or giving gifts to a Youth.
- Inappropriate interactions with Youthren either in person or via forms of media and electronic devices.
- Asking a Youth to keep a secret of any aspect of their relationship.
- Testing of or ignoring professional boundaries or rules.
- The coercive use of social media, texting and on-line forums to groom, or directly abuse.

Implementation Cascade

1. National Policies and Framework

A Task Force or Committee shall be established to direct, coordinate and monitor SFH policy and implementation. This includes custodianship of SSA SFH policy and directing functional departments in generating policies in adherence to the SFH policy.

National teams are to ensure integration of SFH policy in their respective area of work, policy and events. E.g. Youth Programme policy, National Patrol Camp

- a. Design and Implement a Activities Safety Framework. This addresses physical harm in the form of injuries.
- b. Design and Implement an Event Framework and Guidelines which includes SFH as an integral component. This should include event-based Code of Conduct for both Youths and Adults, special dietary management and emergency response and crisis management plans.
- c. Design and implement a Code of Conduct for Adults. This includes a system to ensure all Adult Members subscribe to the Code of Conduct and renew it yearly.
- d. Design and implement a Reporting and Incident Management System which includes Whistle Blowing Policy, incidence monitoring and incident response plan.

- e. Design and Implement a Digital and Communications Safety Framework to combat misuse of personal data and inappropriate contact.
- f. Integration of SFH in Youth Programme schemes as core components appropriate at each section.
- g. Adults In Scouting (HRM)
 - i. Adult recruitment, selection and induction processes to be aligned with the National Safe from Harm Policy.
 - ii. Leader profile (specifications) and role descriptions for all key positions and any other positions that deal with young people, should include the responsibility to keep Youth safe from harm.
 - iii. Appointments of Adults are made only after all appropriate checks have been conducted. They include:
 - 1. Suitable background check (regularly repeated, in accordance with national guidelines and legislation),
 - 2. References check,
 - 3. Interview process.
 - iv. The process of performance assessment for Adults Leaders includes the appraisal of elements related to Safe from Harm (e.g. risk planning and management in activities; facilitating interpersonal relationships; attitudes and behaviours).
- h. Adults In Scouting (Training)
 - i. Integration of SSA SFH in all National Training Courses as core modules. This includes the integration of all other relevant policies and framework appropriate for respective courses.
 - ii. Develop and Implement standalone SFH course for all Adult Members

2. Area

Area is responsible for implementing the SFH policy through its constituent Groups and Area level guidelines and events. This includes the appointment and training of all Adult Leaders and constant monitoring of the adherence of SFH by the Area Team and Groups.

3. Unit

Scout Group is the last link to a successful implementation of SFH. Accordingly, the Group Council shall be responsible for implementation of SFH at the Group level at all times.

4. Adults

All Adults shall be personally responsible for the following

- a. Undertake training on SSA SFH policy and any other relevant policies and guidelines. This includes refresher training where available.
- b. Implement SFH at their areas of work.

- c. Report all incidences of breaches or near misses in accordance with SSA policy for incident management.
- d. Understand and undertake to adhere to SSA Code of Conduct and to review acknowledgement of this Code of Conduct yearly.

5. Youths

- a. Be educated on the SFH framework age-appropriate to their section.
- b. Understand and undertake the Code of Conduct specific for individual events. E.g. Campers or Staff for National Patrol Camp.
- c. Report all incidences of breaches in accordance with SSA policy for incident management

Document Review

This document shall be reviewed annually with any changes made known to all parties involved.

Conclusion

In the pursuit of achieving the Mission of Scouting, we must first ensure our Youth Members are kept Safe from Harm. This is an absolute prerequisite to a successful Youth Programme.

Annexes

A - SSA Activities Safety Framework

B - SSA Whistle Blowing Policy

C -

References

1. Safe From Harm World Policy, Dec 2017, World Scout Bureau
2. Scouts Australia CHILD PROTECTION POLICY and PRESCRIBED PROCEDURES, Nov 2018, The Scout Association of Australia
3. Safety in School Handbook, Mar 2018, Ministry of Education (Singapore)