

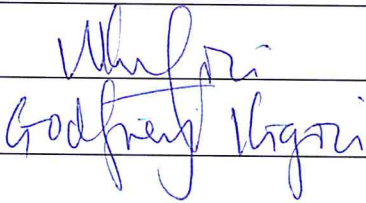
**Rakai Health
Sciences Program**
Improved Health Through Research

Rakai Health Sciences Program (RHSP)

Safeguarding Policy

Document review and Approval.

This document has been reviewed by

Reviewer	Signature	Date reviewed
RHSP Senior Management Team		3 rd April 2024

This document has been approved by

Approver	Signature	Date Approved
RHSP Chair Board of Directors		

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Introduction

Safeguarding policy refers to the measures and actions taken by Rakai Health sciences Program (RHSP) to prevent harm, abuse, or neglect to vulnerable people. These vulnerable people include children, young individuals, and adults who may be at risk. The policy aims to protect them from discrimination, harm, and abuse.

It is the Responsibility of RHSP to ensure that its employees, volunteers, partners, vendors, and operations do not cause harm or neglect to vulnerable people.

RHSP recognizes it has an obligation to put in place reasonable safeguarding measures to ensure as far as possible, the safety and protection of vulnerable individuals within the communities where RHSP operates, these concerns must be addressed and reported to the appropriate authorities.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy and its associated procedures is to provide clarity to **ALL** individuals working for, on behalf of, or in partnership with Rakai Health Sciences Program (RHSP) regarding their engagement with children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

The policy aims to ensure that everyone understands how to interact with vulnerable individuals. It provides guidelines for employees, volunteers, and other representatives. The policy also serves to protect RHSP employees and volunteers. It acknowledges that employees and volunteers may themselves be vulnerable at times (due to illness or other risks).

By promoting a common understanding of safeguarding issues, RHSP aims to develop good practices. These practices apply across the diverse and complex areas where RHSP operates.

Breaches of this policy are treated as disciplinary matters. Consequences may include immediate termination of employment contract, withdrawal of volunteer status, and reporting to relevant authorities.

Definitions

1. Abuse refers to a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. Abuse can be a single act or repeated acts, and it may be unintentional or deliberate. Addressing abuse is crucial to protect the health, survival, development, and dignity of children, young people, and vulnerable adults. It can manifest in various forms:

- a. **Physical Abuse:** involves intentional harm to an individual's body, such as hitting, pushing, or restraining. Can result in physical injuries, pain, or disability.
- b. **Verbal abuse :** refers to a harmful pattern of using words or behaviors to manipulate, intimidate, and exert control over someone. It can include insults, yelling
- c. **Discriminatory abuse :**abuse motivated by a vulnerable person's age, race, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, disability, or other personal characteristic.
- d. **Psychological Abuse:** affects an individual's mental and emotional well-being. It includes threats, intimidation, humiliation, or manipulation. May lead to anxiety, depression, or trauma.

- e. **Financial and material Abuse:** Involves exploiting an individual's financial resources or assets. Examples include theft, fraud, or undue influence. This abuse can harm an individual's financial stability and security.
- f. **Sexual Abuse:** Involves non-consensual sexual acts or exploitation. Can cause physical and emotional trauma. This shall follow procedures spelt out in the RHSP sexual harassment policy.
- g. **Neglect or Negligent Treatment:** occurs when an individual's basic needs (such as food, shelter, or medical care) are not met. Can lead to physical harm, illness, or even death.
- h. **Commercial or Other Exploitation:** Involves using an individual for personal gain or profit. Examples include forced labor, trafficking, or illegal adoption.

2. **A child** is defined as anyone under the age of 18 years. This inclusive definition recognizes that children are generally more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation due to various factors:

- a. **Age:** Children's developmental stages and limited life experience make them susceptible.
- b. **Gender:** Gender-based vulnerabilities may affect boys and girls differently.
- c. **Social and Economic Status:** Children from marginalized backgrounds face additional risks.
- d. **Dependence:** Children rely on caregivers and adults for protection and support.

3. **Vulnerable person/people** – for the purposes of this policy this is an umbrella term which covers children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

4. **Vulnerable adult** is defined as an individual who is 18 years and above and may be unable to take care of or protect themselves against abuse, harm, or exploitation due to various factors:

- a. **Disability:** Physical or mental impairments that affect their ability to safeguard themselves
- b. **Age:** Advanced age may render them more vulnerable.
- c. **Gender:** Gender-based vulnerabilities may impact men and women differently.
- d. **Social and Economic Status:** Vulnerability can arise from socioeconomic factors.
- e. **Illness:** Health conditions that limit their capacity to protect themselves.

5. **Youth or young people** refer to individuals aged 15 to 35 while this age group spans both the categories of children and adults, RHSP acknowledges that young people have specific safeguarding needs that warrant distinct consideration. These needs may differ from those of younger children and older adults.

Scope

This policy applies to all RHSP employees. For the purpose of this policy, an "employee" is defined as anyone who works for or on behalf of RHSP, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity. This policy shall apply to the following:

- Directly employed staff
- Community support staff
- Contractors
- Employees and volunteers of subcontractors
- Suppliers and vendors
- Consultants
- Partners/ Collaborators
- Interns

- Visitors to RHSP work programs and offices

Additionally, the policy extends to partners working with RHSP. These partners/ collaborators are expected to adhere to the policy as a condition of their involvement with RHSP.

The policy serves several purposes:

1. **Protection and Safeguarding:** It outlines what employees can expect RHSP to do to protect and safeguard vulnerable people.
2. **Voice Concerns Safely:** Employees have the assurance that they can safely voice any concerns through an established procedure.
3. **Handling Abuse Reports:** All reports of abuse or potential abuse are taken seriously and addressed effectively.
4. **Efficient Monitoring:** An efficient recording and monitoring system is in place.
5. **Induction on Safeguarding:** Employees, volunteers, subcontracted agencies, and partners/ collaborators receive appropriate induction on safeguarding.
6. **Robust Recruitment Procedure:** A robust recruitment procedure ensures safety. Further more, there are additional procedures in place for those who work directly or indirectly with children, young people, or vulnerable adults, as well as those living in communities alongside them.

Policy Statement

At RHSP, we maintain **zero tolerance** for abuse and exploitation of vulnerable individuals. We recognize that **safeguarding is a collective responsibility**, and we are committed to implementing reasonable measures to ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable people with whom we work, as well as those in the communities we serve.

Our key principles for protecting vulnerable people include:

1. **Equal Protection: Everyone**, regardless of age, race, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, gender reassignment, language, religion, political opinion, national origin, ethnicity, social background, property, disability, or birth status, has an **equal right to protection** from abuse and exploitation.
2. **Best Interests:** The **best interests** of the vulnerable person are **paramount** and guide our decision-making processes.
3. **Responsibility and Action:** RHSP takes **responsibility** for meeting our duty of care toward vulnerable individuals. We **act promptly** when we believe a child, young person, or vulnerable adult is at risk or has been harmed.
4. **Induction and Compliance:** We ensure that **employees and volunteers** receive proper induction on our **Safeguarding policy** during recruitment and onboarding. Additionally, we ensure that **all partners** are informed about and comply with our Safeguarding Standards.
5. **Consistent Procedures:** When collaborating with partners or sub-grantees, we ensure that their safeguarding procedures align with the principles and approaches set out in this policy.
6. **Risk Management:** While we recognize that some level of risk exists, we strive to **minimize** it and limit its impact as much as possible.
7. **Confidentiality and Data Protection:** RHSP respects confidentiality and **protects sensitive personal data**. Information is shared and handled on a **need-to-know basis** to maintain privacy and security.

Responsibilities

All employees, volunteers, consultants, staff, subcontractors, partner organizations, and visitors are **obliged to adhere to this policy**. Their collective efforts should create an environment that **prevents exploitation and abuse** while actively encouraging the reporting of policy breaches through appropriate procedures.

Those working with RHSP will:

1. **Familiarize Themselves:** Read, understand, and adhere to the **RHSP Safeguarding Policy**.
2. **Promote Zero Tolerance:** Strive to **eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment, and abuse** in all work environments.
3. **Build Equitable Relationships:** Develop relationships with stakeholders based on **equality, trust, respect, and honesty**.
4. **Prioritize Safety and Welfare:** Place the safety and well-being of **children and vulnerable people above all other considerations**.
5. **Report Concerns:** Report any concerns related to the welfare of a child or vulnerable person, as well as any behavior by an RHSP representative that violates safeguarding principles.
6. **Privacy and Confidentiality:** In one-on-one situations with children or young people, ensure that another adult is aware of the contact and its purpose. If possible, have another adult within sight.

Individuals working with RHSP will not:

1. **Sexually Harass, Assault, or Abuse:** Engage in sexual harassment, assault, or abuse toward another person.
2. **Physically Harass, Assault, or Abuse:** Physically harm or abuse another person.
3. **Emotionally Abuse:** Behave in ways intended to **shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade** others.
4. **Condone Abusive Behavior:** Participate in behavior that is **abusive, discriminatory, illegal, or unsafe**.
5. **Inappropriate Relationships:** Develop, encourage, or fail to take action regarding relationships with children or vulnerable individuals that could be deemed **sexual, exploitative, or abusive**.
6. **Violent, Inappropriate, or Provocative Acts:** Act in ways that may be **violent, inappropriate, or sexually provocative**.
7. **Secrets with Safety Implications:** Agree with a child to keep a secret that could impact their safety or the safety of other young people.

Supervisors' Responsibilities in Safeguarding

Supervisors play a crucial role in ensuring the effective implementation of our safeguarding policy. Here are their key responsibilities:

1. **Awareness and Support:** Supervisors must ensure that **employees, volunteers, consultants, visitors, and partner organizations** are **informed** about the policy. They should also provide **support** to individuals to ensure compliance with the policy.
2. **Cultural Focus:** Supervisors should foster a culture that **prioritizes safeguarding**. This includes promoting awareness, openness, and vigilance regarding potential risks.
3. **Immediate Action:** When Supervisors **become aware** of any safeguarding concerns, they must **act promptly**. This involves addressing the issue immediately and taking appropriate steps to mitigate risks.
4. **Support for Complainants:** Supervisors should be **supportive** toward employees or volunteers who **report breaches** of the policy.
5. Encouraging a safe reporting environment is essential. By fulfilling these responsibilities, supervisors contribute significantly to maintaining a safe and protective environment within our organization.

