



E-Mail- ncpa@childprotection.gov.lk
Web- www.childprotection.gov.lk

ජාතික ළමා ආරක්ෂක අධිකාරිය
தேசிய சிறுவர் பாதுகாப்பு அதிகாரசபை
National Child Protection Authority

නො.330, තලවතුගොඩ පාර, මාදිවෙල, ශ්‍රී ජයවර්ධනපුර කොට්ටමේ
இலக்கம் 330இ தலவத்துகொட வீதிஇ மதிவெலஇ பூர் ஜயவாதனபுர கோட்டை
No 330, Thalawathugoda Rd. Madiwela. Sri Javawardanapura Kotte.

දුරකථන - } 0112778912
T.P - } 0112778913
FAX - } 0112778915
මගේ අංක } NCPA/Ethics/.02
My No }
எனது இலக்கம் }
දිනය - } 2025/10/.....
Date }
திகதி }

Internal Circular No. 01/2025

Director General,
Deputy Director General,
All Directors,
All Assistant Directors,
All Officers,
All District Child Protection Officers,
All District Psychosocial Officers,
All Divisional Child Protection Officers,
All Officers and Employees,

Ethical Guidelines for Officers Working with Children

Preamble

This Code of Ethics has been formulated in terms of Sections 15(e) and 15(a) of the National Child Protection Authority Act No. 50 of 1998.

In accordance with the Vision of the National Child Protection Authority, child protection officers bear the responsibility of creating a child-friendly and secure environment for children and ensuring that children are protected from all forms of abuse, thereby fostering the development of a protected child. In the discharge of these responsibilities, this Code of Ethics shall serve as a safeguard to protect both the officer and the child protection system from potential ethical breaches that may arise in the course of duty.

This Code of Ethics has been developed with due consideration to the National Child Protection Authority Act No. 50 of 1998, the Children and Young Persons Ordinance No. 48 of 1939, the National Policy on Child Protection of Sri Lanka (2019), the Complaint Handling Operational Guidelines of the National Child Protection Authority, and other applicable domestic statutes. It further incorporates relevant international standards and instruments, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), the Child Protection Minimum Standards (CPMS, 2019), the Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC Guidelines, 2013), Lansdown, G. (2014) on children's capacity development, Keeping Children Safe (2014), the Munro Review of Child Protection (Munro, E., 2011); the UNESCO (2018) Conceptual and Operational Framework on Intercultural Resources, and the UNICEF (2019) Ethical Guidelines on the Use of Images and Messaging Relating to Children.

01. Introduction

For the development and security of any group or society, it is essential that moral values, standards, norms, and commonly accepted principles be upheld. A value is defined as **“the outcome of an evaluative process whereby matters, ideas, concepts, or events are examined and assessed in order to distinguish between good and bad, and to determine**

their correctness, worth, significance, and meaningfulness. Where values exist, individuals or groups understand how they ought to act accordingly.” (Ratnapala Nandasena, 2003, p.17).

Norms are **“the modes of conduct through which values are translated into daily practice.” (Ratnapala Nandasena, 2003, p.17).** Norms may be categorized into three types: **folkways, mores, and law.** Folkways constitute the most basic rules governing group conduct, whereas mores are more serious and strongly binding norms. Law is the formal body of written rules enacted by the State, founded upon both folkways and mores.

Ethics is defined as **“a system of moral principles or values that regulate the conduct of individuals or groups.”**

Professional ethics refers to **“the ethical standards and principles that govern conduct and decision-making within a specific profession.”** Such professional ethics encompass both personal values and social values.

The present Code emphasizes the professional ethics required of officers engaged in child protection. Accordingly, all officers of the National Child Protection Authority fall within its scope. The administration of these officers may be categorized into two dimensions: official (administrative) and professional. From an official standpoint, officers are governed by the Establishments Code, the Financial Regulations, the Complaint Handling Operational Guidelines, and other applicable laws, rules, and circulars. This Code of Ethics shall guide the professional supervision of child protection officers, their official responsibility and accountability, self-regulation, oversight, service advancement, assurance of professionalism, and the maintenance of high standards of conduct. Furthermore, this Code shall serve as a guiding framework in the formulation of institutional or administrative policies of the Authority and in decisions relating to assignments and delegation of duties.

A lack of awareness of ethical standards, failure to meet professional qualifications, neglect in developing professional competence, the absence of effective supervision or oversight mechanisms, disregard for self-discipline and self-development, failure to identify or acknowledge deficiencies in professional character development, overestimation or underestimation of one’s capacity, failure to accord due respect to seniority and specialized expertise, and failure on the part of management to clearly identify institutional objectives and expected outcomes may all lead to ethical breaches. Further, in the course of performing official duties with children, failure to clearly define and maintain appropriate professional boundaries has, in certain instances, resulted in children being subjected to harm, officers being treated as accused persons, and damage being caused to the child protection system. This Code of Ethics is therefore intended to prevent such adverse consequences by clearly identifying the professional boundaries that must be maintained between children and officers, and by providing practical guidance to enable officers to discharge their duties effectively and with integrity. It is expected that all officers shall, at all times, perform their duties in strict compliance with this Code of Ethics.

It is of paramount importance that officers engaged in child protection internalize and self-impose these ethical standards in the discharge of their functions. Additionally, this recognized Code of Ethics seeks to safeguard the dignity and integrity of the child protection profession and to establish a foundation for the initiation of disciplinary proceedings against those who willfully violate its provisions.

02. Objectives

1. To ensure the safety, well-being, and development of the service recipient.
2. To ensure the safety, well-being, and professional development of the officer.
3. To ensure the safety, well-being, and development of the child protection service.
4. To ensure the safety, well-being, and development of the child protection service institution.
5. To ensure the safety, well-being, and development of the child protection system.
6. To ensure the safety, well-being, and development of society as a whole.

03. Intentions

1. To establish, maintain, and safeguard public trust and confidence in child protection within the community.
2. To mutually strengthen the structural linkages and institutional coordination relating to child protection.
3. To maintain and enhance meaningful professional relationships.
4. To minimize and prevent adverse consequences that may affect child protection officers, service recipients, and the wider community, while promoting favorable conditions.
5. To establish and continuously maintain appropriate procedures and mechanisms for taking necessary action in the event of a breach of ethics by a child protection officer.
6. To ensure that child protection is conducted within a recognized professional framework.
7. To respect human rights and human dignity.
8. To safeguard confidentiality and maintain trust.
9. To ensure the provision and continuity of comprehensive child protection services.
10. To enhance professional knowledge and improve the quality of its application in practice.
11. To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.
12. To respect the experiences and cultural diversity of service recipients.
13. To ensure fairness, equity, and adequacy in the provision of services.

04. Key Ethical Principles

In considering the key ethical principles, due regard shall be given to the four core principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:

1. The Best Interests of the Child
2. Participation
3. Survival and Development
4. Non-Discrimination

05. Ethical Standards Required of Officers Engaged in Child Protection

In terms of the National Child Protection Authority Act, all officers and employees of the Authority shall discharge their functions with dedication and accountability in relation to the fivefold mandate of advising the Government on matters pertaining to child protection, ensuring protection from child abuse, preventing child abuse, exercising regulatory oversight, and facilitating coordination. Accordingly, it is expected that every officer and employee shall perform their official duties in strict compliance with the ethical standards set out hereunder.

01. Personal Values

- I. Every officer of the National Child Protection Authority shall possess personal values and principles that reflect a pleasant and professional personality, self-discipline, compassion, genuine commitment, humility, subject-specific knowledge, and professional competence.
- II. During official duty hours, officers shall maintain attire and appearance that uphold professional dignity and do not, in any manner, cause discomfort to service recipients. Such attire shall not be contrary to accepted socio-cultural values.
- III. When engaging in investigations, monitoring, regulatory functions, psychosocial interventions, or preventive activities involving children or service recipients, officers shall exercise due sensitivity in selecting locations appropriate to the nature of the task. Such locations shall ensure confidentiality, avoid public exposure, and provide a setting in which the service recipient feels safe and comfortable.
- IV. As officers working with children, they shall demonstrate creativity, flexibility, and strategic judgment; act appropriately according to context; exercise sound and prompt decision-making; apply analytical and inferential skills; maintain clarity of mind; act without prejudice or preconceived bias; ensure equality and fairness; adopt a collaborative approach; and make evidence-based decisions in order to provide effective and efficient services.

02. Professionalism

- I. In the discharge of duties involving children, an officer shall not act beyond the scope of his or her official mandate. In particular, personal or emotional attachments such as affection, sympathy, compassion, benevolence, fondness, or love shall not be permitted to extend beyond professional boundaries. Such conduct shall not result in undue

influence, conflict of interest, or any improper impact upon the officer, the child, or the child protection system.

- II. In order to maintain professional standards and ensure competent performance, officers shall continuously develop their knowledge, attitudes, and skills; work collaboratively with fellow officers and relevant stakeholders; monitor and evaluate the quality of their service delivery; and provide services that are child-friendly and rights-based.
- III. Officers shall facilitate the optimal growth and development of each child under their care by enabling the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, and skills relating to child protection. They shall further promote and strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms in order to ensure sustainable safeguarding practices.

03. Responsibility in Using Media

- I. Officers shall use media in a manner that does not cause harm to themselves, others, or society. In particular, when using social media, officers shall not act in ways that could damage their professional reputation, the reputation of the institution, or the integrity of the child protection system. Officers shall refrain from establishing any personal relationships with service recipients via private communication devices or social media during official duties, except as strictly required for the performance of their professional responsibilities.
- II. In all programs and activities involving children, officers shall ensure that the identity and facial images of children are not disclosed, thereby safeguarding their privacy and confidentiality.

04. Unfair Privilege

- I. When conducting official duties with external institutions, organizations, or individuals, officers shall maintain professional relationships that uphold the dignity and integrity of the Authority. Officers shall not accept any gifts, donations, or tokens of appreciation from service recipients, even if voluntarily offered. Any such donations shall be encouraged to be directed to the Child Protection Fund.
- I. Officers shall not, under any circumstance, use their official authority or any other means to solicit privileges, benefits, or advantages from a child. Children shall not be involved in the personal activities of officers, nor shall officers manipulate, influence, or shape children in accordance with personal preferences, interests, or biases.

05. Honesty and Good Faith

- I. In the provision of services to children, officers shall act with transparency and integrity, free from personal gain or benefits, impartial, independent, and uninfluenced by external pressures. Actions shall be conducted without preconceived judgments or bias, and shall reflect good faith, honesty, and ethical propriety.

06. Reliability

- I. Officers shall not mislead a child or children by promising or representing any actions or services that the Authority cannot legitimately provide in order to please the child or gain their trust. Officers must ensure that the child and the child's guardians are prepared only for what is realistically possible. Furthermore, any trust established with the child shall never be violated or betrayed under any circumstances.

07. Ethics Relating to Complaint Intervention

- I. A child-friendly complaint mechanism shall be maintained, and during the intervention of child abuse complaints, the officer shall not involve friends, family members, or any other individuals not directly relevant to the complaint.
- II. During complaint investigations, regulation, supervision, monitoring, or other official duties, officers shall act in accordance with the National Child Protection Authority's Complaint Handling Guidelines and other relevant directives, ensuring that records and logs are accurately maintained and updated without omission.
- III. Officers shall not investigate complaints that personally involve themselves.
- IV. When engaging children in legal procedures, the officer shall ensure the child's safety and protection, implement safeguarding measures and emergency response plans, and under no circumstances allow direct contact between the child and the alleged perpetrator.

08. Reporting

- I. In all official duties, the confidentiality of information concerning children must be safeguarded to the maximum extent. All data and reports shall be accurately maintained and promptly reported to the appropriate institution and responsible officer without delay.

09. Non-Discrimination

- I. Children shall be provided services without any form of distinction, exclusion, or preference based on social, economic, ethnic, religious, caste, nationality, color, language, sex, gender identity, disability, health status, culture, or legal status, or any other ground.

10. Victim Protection

- I. All necessary measures shall be taken within the officer's area of responsibility to prevent children from being subjected to violence, abuse, or any form of physical, psychological, sexual, or neglectful harm. Officers shall ensure the protection of child victims, coordinate access to appropriate interventions and treatment, and take steps to prevent secondary victimization.

11. Appreciation and Respect

- I. When working with children, prior to making any decision that may impact a child's life, officers shall, whenever possible, seek the child's views and ensure that the child is not subjected to psychological coercion.
- II. Every child shall be valued and respected as a member of their family, school, society, and community. Officers shall respect the child's natural attachments and relationships with parents, siblings, guardians, and other significant persons, as well as the child's opinions and beliefs.
- III. Respecting the paramount right of the child's family, officers shall, instead of removing the child from the family, take appropriate measures to minimize risks within the family environment.

12. Protection from Abuse and Protection of Rights

- I. Providing the child with necessary protection to prevent any abuse, violation of rights, or related issues.

13. Confidentiality of Information

- I. Ensuring that all information received in the course of official duties is not misused and that its confidentiality is strictly maintained.

14. Compliance with Rules and Regulations and Duty Discipline

- I. Exercising full understanding of and consistently adhering to all laws, regulations, statutes, policies, guidelines, circulars, and ethical codes relating to the protection, survival, development, and participation of children while performing official duties.
- II. Complying with administrative and legal directives, refraining from acting autonomously without proper authority, and seeking higher guidance in challenging or complex situations.
- III. Promptly reporting to senior authorities any officer or staff member under one's supervision or authority who acts contrary to child protection laws, regulations, or policies.
- IV. Recognizing that child protection is not a competitive field. Avoiding attempts to outshine colleagues, diminish others, or engage in sabotage. Instead, working collaboratively, sensitively, and empathetically with peers and subordinate officers through a unified, coordinated approach.

15. Participation

- I. Ensuring that children's involvement is not tokenistic, decorative, or nominal.
- II. Facilitating meaningful child participation by enabling children to initiate, share decisions with adults, and cooperate with trust. Encouraging a structured and purposeful engagement of children, officials, society, and the community to support genuine child-centered participation.

16. Best Interest

- I. In all interactions, service delivery, interventions, and decision-making involving children, prioritizing the child's physical and mental well-being and acting with the child's best interests as the paramount consideration.

17. Children First

- I. Prioritizing children in all emergency and disaster situations and consistently delivering services in a manner aligned with the principle of providing the best possible outcomes for the child, ensuring the child's needs and well-being are placed foremost.

18. Identifying the Boundaries of Child Protection

- I. When engaging in any official activity outside one's designated area of authority, obtaining formal approval from senior officers and informing the officer in charge of the relevant area.
- II. Recognizing the limits of one's official duties and acting strictly within those boundaries.
- III. Cooperating and coordinating with other officials working with children, including residential officers, child rights promotion officers, early childhood development officers, advisory officers, and other relevant personnel.
- IV. Whenever receiving services for child protection from another individual, officer, or institution, ensuring that the person or institution possesses adequate qualifications and experience and acting in a manner that avoids conflicts between responsibilities.
- V. Any teaching, training, service provision, or educational activity related to child protection undertaken personally must not be conducted during official duty hours.
- VI. Participation in teaching, training, service provision, or educational activities related to child protection must occur only upon direct request to the Authority and with prior approval from senior management, and any benefits or allowances must be obtained only with the recommendation of the Board of Directors and prior approval of the Secretary of the Ministry.
- VII. Avoiding undue interference with the official duties or responsibilities of any individual officer.

19. Mental Health and Well-being

- I. While continuously engaging with sensitive human behaviors related to child protection, child abuse, maltreatment, or violence, officers must remain attentive to their own mental health and well-being.

- II. If an officer perceives a deterioration in their mental health or well-being, they must step back from their duties and promptly inform senior management.

20. Standards and Quality of Programs

- I. Programs, trainings, awareness activities, educational interventions, and other initiatives related to child protection must be designed and implemented in accordance with accepted standards and best practices, ensuring high quality and effectiveness.

21. Protection of Ethics

- I. All officers and employees of the Authority must acquire knowledge and understanding of this Code of Ethics, and ignorance of any part of it shall not constitute an excuse.
- II. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of all officers to report to senior management if any officer or employee breaches this Code of Ethics.

22. Enforcement

Any breach of this Code of Ethics shall constitute grounds for taking disciplinary action in accordance with applicable rules and procedures.

Prithi Inoka Ranasinghe
Chairperson
National Child Protection Authority

References

- National Child Protection Act, No. 50 of 1998
- Ordinance on Children and Young Persons, No. 48 of 1939
- National Policy on Child Protection in Sri Lanka (2017)
- Complaint Handling Guidelines of the National Child Protection Authority
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Children’s Charter)

Key References

- UNCRC, 1989 – UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child
- CPMS, 2019 – Child Protection Minimum Standards by The Alliance
- ERIC Guidelines, 2013 – Ethical Research Involving Children
- Lansdown, G. (2005). *The Evolving Capacities of the Child*
- Keeping Children Safe (2014). *International Child Safeguarding Standards*
- Munro, E. (2011). *The Munro Review of Child Protection*
- UNESCO. (2018). Intercultural Competences: Conceptual and Operational Framework. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
 - Retrieved from: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000262344>
- UNICEF. (2019). Ethical Guidelines for the Ethical Reporting and Use of Images and Messages Involving Children. New York: United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).
 - Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/documents/unicef-ethical-guidelines>