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<h2 style="color: #0070C0;">Child Protection Policy</h2>			APPROVED BY: Dr. Sunette Steyn Executive Chairperson
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PREAMBLE

Heartbeat is a Section 21 registered company: an NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) and an NPO (Non-Profit Organisation) that reaches Orphans and Vulnerable Children throughout South Africa. Its funding is obtained from South African and individual donors: civil society in the form of private sector organisations and individuals; government and international aid agencies.

VISION

Heartbeat dreams of all children in Africa being happy and having opportunities to fulfil their dreams.

MISSION

To empower Orphans and Vulnerable Children to reach their full potential through quality service provision, development and capacity building.

It is in this context that the organisation, as a responsible employer, has formalised the workplace in the form of standard policies and procedures that protect both the employee and the clients (children, their families and the communities within which they exist) as well as ensure transparent and fair expectations and practices.

Policy and Procedure

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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is for all those involved with Heartbeat and the children it cares for, their families and their communities are protected in terms of legislation, regulation and ethics.

Heartbeat views a child as a human being under the age of 18 years. Child abuse is a general term used about situations where the child may experience harm. We differentiate between different types of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse.

1.1. Physical abuse

An act or acts which may result in injury to, or death of, a child.

1.2. Emotional abuse

Any act or failure to act by the parent, guardian or caregiver which results in impaired psychological and/or emotional functioning and development of a child which may be expressed as anxiety, withdrawal, aggression, depression or delayed development. Emotional abuse is sometimes hard to detect.

1.3. Sexual abuse

Any act or acts which result in the exploitation of a child, whether with their consent or not, for the purpose of sexual or erotic gratification. This may be by adults or other young persons who are intellectually, emotionally, physically or sexually more mature than the child victim. Types of sexual abuse include, but are not limited to incest, rape, exhibition, sodomy, child prostitution, paedophilia, pornography, voyeurism, and cyber sex.

1.4. Neglect

Neglect is what you do or fail to do as a parent, guardian or caregiver that can hurt or cause injury to a child or even cause a child to leave home.

Types of neglect:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Failure to provide primary education.

1.5. Prevalence and Incidence of Child Abuse

The extent to which child abuse is prevalent in any society is often difficult to determine. In many countries child abuse figures are simply not available. Where data is collected, this only refers to reported cases because of the nature of abuse; many more go unreported or undetected.

In spite of such difficulties, however, the World Health Organisation drew the following conclusions in 1997:

- Child abuse has been a societal phenomenon for centuries and exists in all societies.
- In countries where there is reliable reporting, between 1 in 5000 and 1 in 10 000 children under the age of five die every year from physical violence.
- In the same countries, every year, between 1 in 180 and 1 in 1000 children are reported as abused.

1.6. Effects of Abuse

The effects of abuse and particularly the long-term consequences for children include the following:

- Death
- Recurrence of abuse
- Permanent physical and intellectual impairment
- Educational and emotional failure
- Criminal and delinquent behaviour
- The possibility that the abused in turn becomes an abuser.

2. WHY IS THIS POLICY NECESSARY?

Given this background, it is of the utmost importance that Heartbeat, as an organisation dealing with children, have such a policy in place to safeguard children from any type of abuse as far as possible.

There is a variety of ways in which the issue of child abuse may come to the attention of Heartbeat's work as an organisation, *inter alia*:

- A child discloses abuse or gives reason to suspect that he/she, or another child or children, are being abused.
- The abuse of children in another agency comes to the attention of a Heartbeat staff member/volunteer.

- A member of staff or a volunteer abuses a child that they are in contact with through Heartbeat's work.
- A member of staff or a volunteer abuses a child outside work (i.e member of their family).
- A child in Heartbeat's programme abuses another child.

The following section will deal with the code of conduct that Heartbeat expects from staff members and volunteers as well as the practical applications of the policy.

3. TO WHOM DOES THIS POLICY APPLY?

The policy applies to:

- All Heartbeat staff members
- All Volunteers
- All Partnerships
- All Contractors, Evaluators, etc.
- All Community Childcare Forums (CCCF's)
- All Caretakers of children
- All Donors
- All Sponsors of children.

4. CODE OF CONDUCT

It is important for all persons mentioned above working with the children at Heartbeat to:

- Be aware of situations that may present risks and manage these.
- As far as possible be visible when working with children (e.g. do not close the door when you visit a home).
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed.
- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged.
- Raise awareness amongst children around abuse and encourage them to raise any concerns with regard to abuse.
- Empower children – discuss their rights with them, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

It is inappropriate to:

- Spend excessive time alone with a child/children away from others.
- Take a child/children to your home where they will be alone with you for no particular reason.
- Have the child/children with whom any one person mentioned in paragraph 3 works to stay overnight at his/her home unsupervised.
- To sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working.
- Hit or physically assault or abuse a child/children.
- Develop romantic/sexual relationships with a child/children.
- Act in ways that may be abusive.
- Place a child in a situation where the child/children is/are at risk of abuse.
- Disclose the medical status of a child/children in the programme.

All persons mentioned above should avoid the following actions or behaviour:

- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice that is inappropriate, offensive or abusive. (Example: Swearing at a child)
- Act or dress in a manner that is inappropriate or sexually provocative.
- Condone behaviour of children that is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Emotional abuse like humiliating, belittling, or degrading of children.
- Discriminate against children or favouring particular children, thus excluding others.
- Sponsors to visit individual children at their homes.

Everyone to whom this code of conduct applies, should keep the words of section 28(2) of the Constitution of South Africa in mind, namely: **“A child’s best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child”**.

5. PROCEDURES IN THE CASE OF ABUSE

5.1. Reporting Child Abuse by someone outside the organisation

If a staff member/ volunteer suspects that a child is being abused by family (e.g. grannies/aunts/uncles) or other people, he/she must follow the procedure described below:

- Noting the date and time they identified the abuse
- Noting the reason for suspecting the abuse.
- Report it to their manager [*Child care worker (CCW) → (Community Development Facilitator (CDF)/ Child care team leader (CCTL)/Income Generation Coordinator (IGC) → CDF]*]

- The CCW/CCTL/CDF could assist the child to disclose the truth of the situation. *(Confidentiality is crucial)*
- The CDF/CCTL must assess the situation and make a recommendation.
- In the case of sexual/physical abuse the CDF/CCTL should get the CPU involved in the matter.
- If the child is emotionally abused the CDF/CCTL must approach the abuser and get a social worker involved to counsel the family.
- If the CDF/CCTL can't deal with the situation it must be reported to the Programme Manager.
- If a staff member/volunteer suspects that a staff member/volunteer of the partner organisation is abusing a child, it must be reported to the Programme Manager. The Programme Manager will report it to the relevant Manager or committee of the partner.

5.2. Reporting of Child Abuse by someone inside the organisation

If a staff member/volunteer suspects that a child is being abused by another staff member/volunteer, the following procedure is applicable:

- Noting the date and time they identified the abuse.
- Noting the reason for suspecting the abuse.
- Reporting the matter to the relevant manager:
 - If a CDF/CCTL/IGC suspects a CCW/volunteer is abusing a child/children, he/she must report it to the Programme Manager.
 - If a CCW suspects that a CDF/CCTL/IGC is abusing a child/children, he/she must report it to the Programme Manager/Income Generation Manager.
 - If a CCW/CDF/CCTL suspects that a Programme Manager is abusing a child/children he/she must report it to the CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER.
 - If a staff member/volunteer suspects any other managers are abusing a child/children he/she must report it to the CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER.
 - If a staff member/volunteer suspects that the CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER is abusing the children it must be reported to the Board of Directors of Heartbeat.
 - Disciplinary steps will be taken to deal with the situation.

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

- All persons mentioned above would be obliged to sign the code of conduct with regard to child abuse.
- If the code of conduct is in any way violated by a staff member, disciplinary action will be taken and potential legal action might follow.
- If the code of conduct is in any way violated by a volunteer, the volunteer would be asked to leave and legal action might follow.
- If the code of conduct is in any way violated by a staff member of the partner organisation, it will be reported to the relevant manager and disciplinary and legal action might follow.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

7.1. Confidentiality and Children

The issue of confidentiality is of the utmost importance when dealing with issues and concerns regarding possible abuse. Staff and volunteers must exercise extreme vigilance in protecting information and must pass on this information via the reporting process as described.

When working with children, the issue of confidentiality becomes very difficult. When a child discloses abuse, the person who responds to that cannot promise to keep any secrets. For this reason, it is essential to make clear the fact that it may not be possible to keep such information wholly confidential. Ideally this should be done before any such matter arises. A written document or statement could be used to get the child's permission to share the information with selected other people. The process must be discussed with the child to ensure that he/she knows at all times what to expect.

7.2. Confidential record-keeping

Any concerns, allegations or disclosure must be written down at the time or as soon as possible after the concern has been raised. Records should be signed and dated.

Detailed records are very important especially where the child is disclosing abuse or making an allegation. Every detail of the alleged abuse should be recorded and all subsequent actions should be documented.

Records must be kept in a safe place where it is not accessible to everyone. If possible, the records should be locked away. Information may only be shared with relevant parties and it must always be done in such a way that the confidentiality is maintained.

Signed aton the.....day of.....200...

Name & Surname: _____

Capacity: _____

(Staff member/volunteer/partner/Contractor/CCCF member/caretaker/donor/sponsor)

Signature: _____

Chief Executive Officer: _____