

## Protection of Vulnerable Adults

Version 1.2 May 2019

### Introduction

PROJECT ARUNIMA, recognizes its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of Persons in its care.

The main elements to the Protection Policy are:

- Prevention through the creation of a positive Organization atmosphere and the teaching and support offered to staff and service users.
- Protection by following agreed procedures, ensuring staff are trained and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to protection concerns.
- Support to persons who may have been abused.

This policy applies to all service users, staff, parents, volunteers and visitors to PROJECT ARUNIMA.

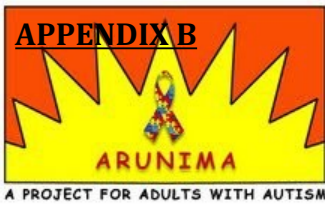
### Organization Policy

We recognize that, in harmony with our Vision and Principles, it is our responsibility as a learning community to support healthy self-respect, confidence, and clear lines of communication with a trusted staff, as proactive strategies to prevent abuse.

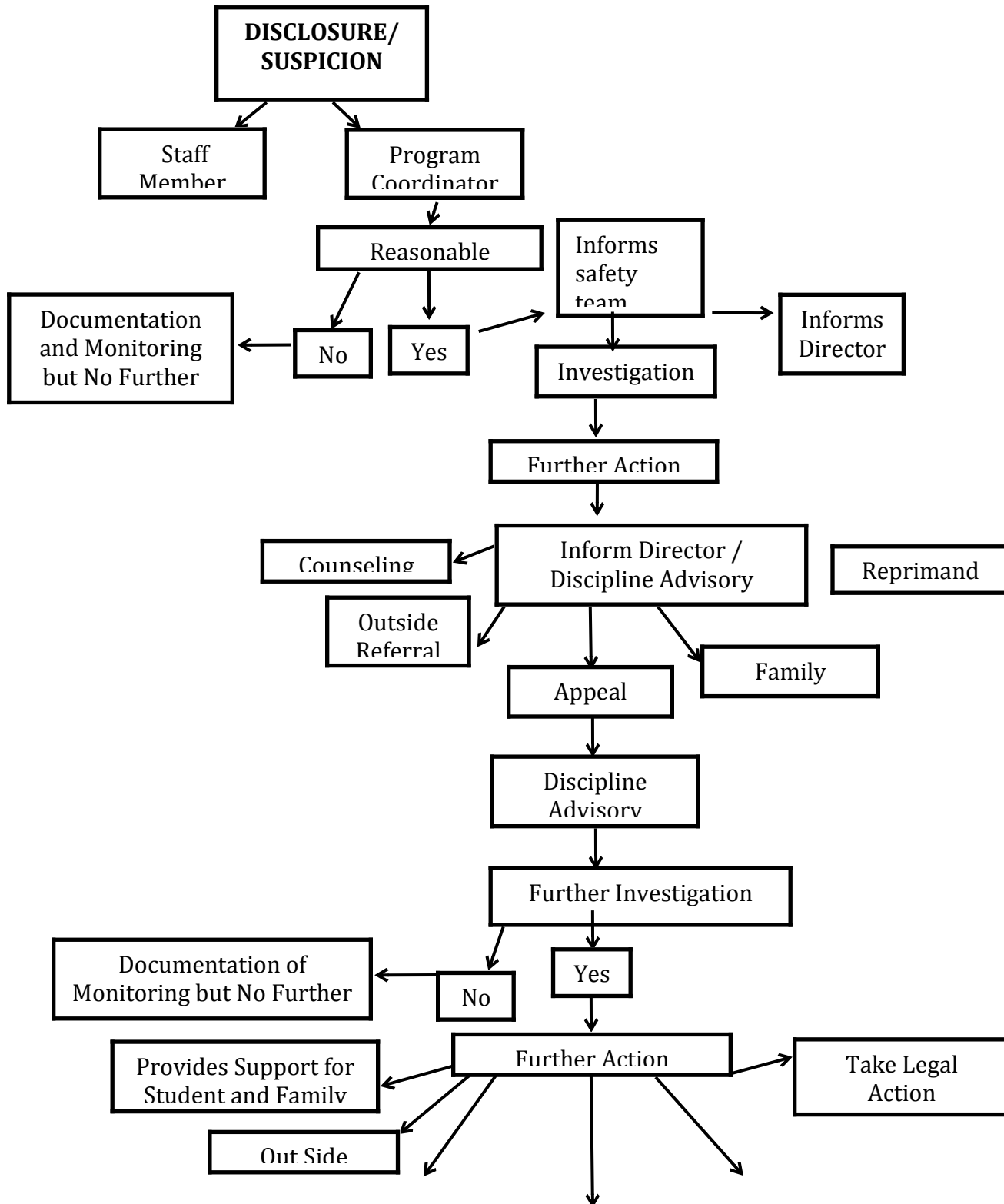
Our organization will therefore:

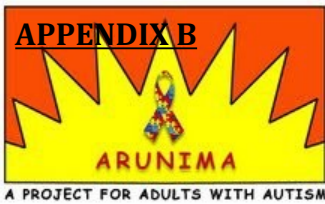
- Establish and maintain an environment where persons feel safe and secure and are encouraged to communicate and where staff listen with acceptance and respect.
- Ensure that persons know that there are staff within the Organization whom they can approach if they are worried or are in difficulty.
- Include opportunities integrated into daily activities by which we can equip persons with the skills they need to stay safe from abuse.
- Train staff and parents to recognize and support issues of abuse or neglect.

The Organization will work with parents to ensure that Persons are safe and are knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities to themselves and to each other so that they can grow and learn in a safe and supportive environment.



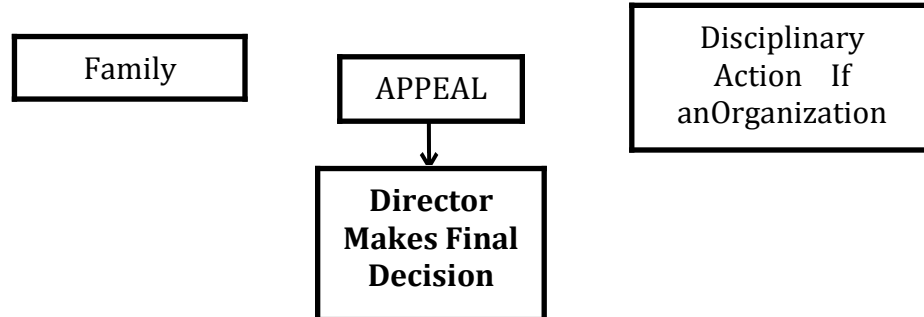
Reporting and Responding to Allegations of Abuse  
**Steps Followed After Disclosure**





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It is obligatory for parents, guardians, professionals, teachers, teacher's aides, and administrators to report incidents of physical or psychological violence, aggression, harassment, physical or sexual abuse immediately or within the next day, to an administrator. The administrator shall investigate and provide written documentation including the date, person or persons involved, and any additional relevant information. Following a thorough investigation, the administrator shall follow the steps noted in these guidelines, documenting all aspects of the investigation and resulting actions. Such actions include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

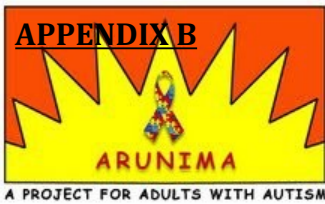
- parent notification
- meeting with parents
- meeting with others pertinent to the case, including alleged perpetrator(s)
- contacting Organization doctor
- psychological assessment
- suspension or termination of employment (if an Organization employee)
- initiate appropriate legal action

### Process of Appeal

Step One: An appeal on behalf of either the victim(s) or alleged perpetrator(s) of actions taken by the Organization administration shall be submitted, in writing, within 48 hours from the date of written notification of the disposition of the matter, to the Organization's Discipline Advisory Committee.

Step Two: The committee's decision may be further appealed to the Director, in writing, within 5 Organization days of notification of disposition by the Discipline Advisory Committee.

Step Three: Review by the Director, who, within 5 days shall render a decision. Such a decision, on behalf of the Organization, shall be final.



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### SOME TERMS EXPLAINED

#### **(1)Discipline Advisory Committee**

The purpose of the Organization's Discipline Advisory Committee is to promote the social and emotional development of persons, foster respect for one another, and appreciate diversity in order to promote a safe and harmonious environment free of abuse. It also acts as an advisory forum in case of serious discipline issues involving persons OR between persons and teachers. It ensures due process and a balanced perspective on complicated issues involving the emotional and social well-being of the community.

The Committee shall be composed of the following:

- Psychologist as consultant, as required
- Safety Team (appointed from within the organization)
- Medical personnel (Organization Doctor or outside consultant) as required
- Legal council as required

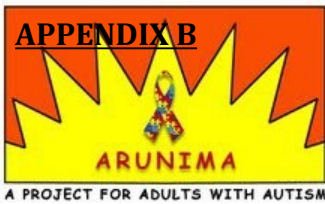
In the case of alleged abuse by an Organization employee, the Director shall be responsible for investigating, documenting and determining disciplinary actions. Depending on the circumstances this may include referral to the appropriate legal authorities. Staff may be suspended, with or without pay, while the investigations is underway. If allegations are determined to be true, it may result in termination of employment or other disciplinary measures. *Measures will be taken to ensure due process and to verify validity of accusations before an investigation takes place.*

#### **(2)Abuse and Neglect**

The primary determination of abuse is that it is dependent on some form of a relationship that is used to meet the need of the more powerful person, such as a member of the family, a staff member, or a friend. Abuse can be physical, emotional, and/or sexual in nature.

**Abuse includes the following:**

- Inflicting physical injury on an individual by other than accidental means, causing skin bruising, burns, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function, death
- Creating a substantial risk of physical harm to an individual's bodily functioning;
- Committing acts that are cruel or inhumane regardless of observable injury. Such acts may include, but are not limited to, instances of extreme discipline demonstrating a disregard of an individual's pain and/or mental suffering



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- Assaulting or criminally mistreating an individual
- Engaging in actions or omissions resulting in injury to, or creating a substantial risk to the physical or mental health or development of an individual
- Failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any of the above.

### POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

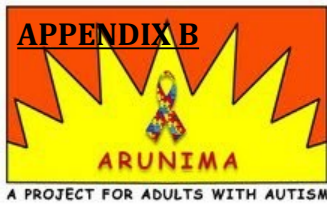
- Unexplained bruises and welts on any part of the body
- Injuries reflecting shape of article used (electric cord, belt, buckle, ping pong paddle, hand)
- Injuries that regularly appear after absence or vacation
- Unexplained burns, especially to soles, palms, back, or buttocks
- Burns with a pattern from an electric burner, iron, or cigarette
- Rope burns on arms, legs, neck, or torso
- Unexplained laceration, abrasions, or fractures
- Unexplained behaviour change

### Neglect includes the following:

- Physical (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate, such as leaving persons unsupervised for any extended period of time)
- Medical (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment)
- Emotional (e.g., a pattern of actions, such as inattention to a Student's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, specific examples may include verbal humiliation, refusing to acknowledge presence of Student, ignoring behaviour that may compromise the student's dignity, invasion of privacy for no specific reason, violent threats, etc.)

### POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF NEGLECT

- Individual looks unwashed, hungry, has lice, dry skin etc. when he or she returns to the center from home.
- Parents do not respond to repeated communications from the organization
- Individual does not want to go home/come to the center
- Parents cannot be reached in the case of emergency/ center cannot be reached regularly



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**Sexual Abuse** is committing or allowing to be committed any sexual offense against a Student or intentionally touching either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus, or breasts of a service user for other than hygiene or personal care purposes.

Abuse includes sexual contact that is accomplished by force or threat of force, regardless of the age of the participants, and all sexual contact between a staff and a service user, regardless of whether there is deception or the service user understands the sexual nature of the activity. Sexual contact between an older and a younger service user also can be abusive if there is a significant disparity in age, development, or size, rendering the victim incapable of giving informed consent. The sexually abusive acts may include sexual penetration, sexual touching, or non-contact sexual acts such as exposure or voyeurism.

Sexual abuse has some different characteristics from other abuse that warrant special attention. Sexual abuse requires more planning (called “grooming”) and far more secrecy than other forms abuse, so is more difficult to report.

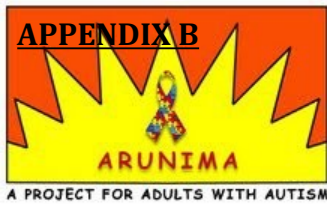
The perpetrator may present himself or herself as a loving individual to other staff and service users, thus rendering it difficult to identify signs like distress or fear. In fact, the service user may actually enjoy the sexual encounters. **As long as there is a power differential between the persons involved such an incident will be considered abusive and appropriate action will be taken.**

The organization cannot take responsibility for the counselling and reform of the offender

### POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

- Sexual knowledge, behavior, or use of language not appropriate to age level
- Unusual interpersonal relationship patterns
- Venereal/Sexually transmitted disease in a service user of any age
- Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding to the oral, genital, or anal areas
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Not wanting to be alone with an individual
- Pregnancy, especially at a young age
- Extremely protective staff member/ parents
- Unexplained behavioural changes

**If a Staff Member is accused of Abuse**



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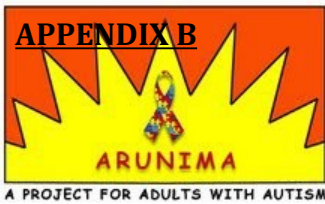
It is essential that the high standards of concern and professional responsibility adopted with regard to alleged abuse are displayed when members of staff are accused of abuse. ( Please also refer to the policy against sexual harassment of women in the work place – Appendix 2) This means that, in the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender,PROJECT ARUNIMAwill conduct a full investigation and take any and all professional and legal steps deemed necessary to protect persons.

In this case, the Director will be responsible for the investigation along with the Protection Officer and Program Coordinator.

### Supporting Persons at Risk

- The Organization recognizes that persons who are abused or who witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth or a healthy sense of trust in themselves or other human beings.
- The Organization will endeavor to support all persons through a:
  - person-centered program which emphasizes holistic development of the mind, body, emotions and spirit of the Student.
  - positive, supportive and secure environment that gives all persons a sense of being respected and valued.
  - consistent approach to discipline that assures that even though some behavior is unacceptable, nevertheless persons will be valued and treated with care and respect
  - commitment to develop productive, supportive relationships with parents
  - development and support of a responsive and knowledgeable staff, trained to respond appropriately in student protection situations.
  - recognition that in a home environment where there is domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse, persons may also be vulnerable and in need of support or protection.

**GUIDELINES FOR STAFF/VOLUNTEERS/VISITORS INTERACTING WITH PERSONS**



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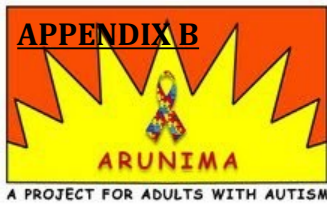
1. Avoid being alone in a room with a service user unless the moment calls for it (for example if the individual is dressing/undressing and needs assistance).
2. Special care must be taken when a staff of the opposite sex is interacting with a service user. There must always be another staff member of the same sex as the student present in the room.
3. No volunteer or visitor (including visiting therapists) should be alone in the room with any service user at PROJECT ARUNIMA

### **Prevention of violence, verbal and physical abuse:**

- While being stern and firm is often called for, screaming instructions or orders – in other words, being “rude” or “disrespectful” to the service user, is inappropriate.
- Staff members must immediately ask for help if a service user exhibits challenging behaviours. The “helping staff member” can be there as a physical presence or a helping hand if the service user needs to be restrained from hurting him/herself or others.
- If the situation reaches a point where physical restraint is required, there must always be two staff members present so that one staff member does not have to exert excessive physical force. The restraint must be continued for a minimum amount of time – and must end as soon as the service user has been prevented from causing immediate harm to himself/herself or others.
- Restraint can only be in the form of holding both the persons hands, after a verbal explanation to the service user of why this is being done. ***“I am holding your hands because you are hitting me/hurting yourself/hurting so and so.”***
- If a situation becomes overwhelming for the staff member handling it, ASK FOR HELP. Once the individual’s security and safety are guaranteed, walk away to give yourself some space and breathing time.
- If a staff member finds the treatment of a service user by another staff member objectionable, he or she must point it out. Looking at the situation from the “outside” allows for objectivity that may not always be possible for the person handling the situation at a given moment.

Additional tips to prevent neglect and abuse:





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- ✚ Persons must always be groomed and dressed well.
- Any torn or faded clothing should be repaired/discarded.
- Our persons are often not aware of their personal appearance and may have buttons undone/ pants slipping below their waist/cleavage showing. These must be dealt with immediately and appropriately. (***A staff member goes upto the student and gently tells him or her to fix clothing (providing assistance where required, using appropriate and clear language, out of the earshot of others.)***)
- If a service user removes or tears own clothing in a public area, she/he is to be immediately directed to a private area (bathroom / bedroom / an unoccupied room). The directing has to be done without undue attention and that is to continue once removed to the private area.
- Any “behavior” that compromises the safety of a service user cannot be ignored. In the event that such a situation does occur, the service user is to be immediately directed to a safe area. The directing has to be done without undue attention and that is to continue once in a private area.