

Child Protection Policy
SEGA Co. and SEGA Girls' Secondary School
April 2019

Child Protection Policy for SEGA Co. & SEGA Girls' Secondary School

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|--|-----------|
| 1. Purpose..... | 3 |
| 2. Scope | 3 |
| 3. Responsibility for Leadership and Enforcement of this Policy..... | 4 |
| 4. Risk Management at All Stages of SEGA Programs Implementation | 4 |
| 5. Roles of Staff in Preventing and Responding to Abuse | 9 |
| 5.1 Roles and Responsibilities of All Staff..... | 9 |
| 5.2 Role of the Headmistress | 9 |
| 5.2.1 In General..... | 9 |
| 5.2.2 In Specific Instances..... | 9 |
| 5.2.3 Regarding Allegations of Child Abuse by Staff..... | 10 |
| 5.3 Role of the Counselor / Designated Person for Child Protection..... | 10 |
| 5.3.1 In General..... | 10 |
| 5.3.2 In Specific Instances..... | 10 |
| 5.3.3 Role of Counselor Regarding Allegations of Child Abuse by Staff | 11 |
| 5.4 Role of the School Board..... | 11 |
| 5.5 Role of SEGA Board..... | 11 |
| 6. Procedures for Recruitment of Staff at SEGA | 13 |
| 6.1 Process for Recruitment..... | 13 |
| 6.2 Induction of New Personnel | 13 |
| 7. Training of Staff | 14 |
| 7.1 Guidelines for Staff on Interacting with Students..... | 14 |
| 7.2 SEGA Staff Policies Reminder | 16 |
| 8. Training of Students..... | 17 |
| Ensure Students Have Access to and Know SEGA's Policies | 17 |
| 9. Legal Context for this Policy | 18 |
| 9.1 Definitions and Important Legal Points | 18 |
| 10. Special Considerations for Specific Types of Abuse | 19 |
| 10.1 Child-on-Child Harmful Behaviours | 19 |
| 10.2 Suicidal Concerns or Self-Harming Behaviours..... | 19 |
| 11. Child Protection Policy – Appendix..... | 20 |
| 11. 1 Definitions of Abuse | 20 |
| 12. Child Protection Policy – Appendix..... | 24 |

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- To provide SEGA staff, students, parents, and partners guidelines for preventing, identifying and responding to abuse or exploitation of SEGA students or beneficiaries / community members involved in SEGA programs; and
- to understand their role in keeping children safe

This policy aims to ensure SEGA provides a safe environment for Tanzanian girls to learn and thrive, whether on SEGA's campus or in its community outreach or associated programs. While the laws and policies governing treatment of children in Tanzania are excellent, much work is needed to ensure they are implemented. SEGA aims to fulfill its duty in protecting the girls entrusted to its care. SEGA staff will be guided by this policy and it will be used for training and to guide handling of all incidents, to fully institutionalize it within SEGA's programs.

2. Scope

| <u>Four Key Components of School-Based Child Protection</u> | |
|--|---|
| 1) Policies and Procedures | By adopting this policy which is in harmony with national policies, and through enforcement, SEGA aims to maintain a strong foundation for child protection. All staff will sign the policy. |
| 2) Staff Training | The policies will be operationalized through regular staff training, mandatory for all staff. |
| 3) Student Training | Strudent awareness and empowerment to report any abusive situations is critical to bringing child protection principles to life at SEGA. Students will be aware and able to report if they know how to recognize and respond to abuse; know what the policies are; and know who to report to. |
| 4) Parental/Guardian Awareness | As with all other aspects of SEGA's education program, parents and guardians have a vital role to play in supporting their girls to be safe; adhere to SEGA rules; and speak up. Parents will be made aware of the policy when enrolling students; and will sign a statement. |

This policy is relevant to:

Children

- SEGA School students;
- other children who are SEGA beneficiaries
- other children in contact with SEGA staff as they carry out their work

SEGA Staff and Associates

- all staff, paid or voluntary, part-time or full-time;
- teaching and non-teaching staff at SEGA School;
- SEGA Mentors, Coordinators in Community Programs
- Staff of partners (government and otherwise) helping SEGA conduct its selection or training activities
- SEGA Board

3. Responsibility for Leadership and Enforcement of this Policy

All SEGA staff and Board Members have a full and active part to play in protecting students. Overall responsibility, implementation and review of this policy with School Staff rests with the Headmistress.

The SEGA Manager has overall responsibility with regard to other Company Program staff and beneficiaries (IE Msichana Kisasa/ Girls Clubs in Communities) not under jurisdiction of the Headmistress

4. Risk Management at All Stages of SEGA Programs Implementation

The following table provides guidelines for specific areas of SEGA's operations, to prevent potential harm or abuse of children in SEGA's care:

| Activity | Guideline | Outcome | Responsible |
|------------------------|--|---|---|
| Admission of Students | <p>A selection committee of at least 3 people (SEGA Staff) should be designated to make decisions about Selection and Admission of students to SEGA—including a SEGA Board Member</p> <p>No person outside of SEGA shall be delegated responsibility for conducting SEGA Selection activities, except when accompanied by SEGA Selection Committee Member</p> <p>A lead person (Admissions Coordinator) shall be designated</p> <p>All steps of the process shall be shared in a transparent way with committee members</p> <p>Decisions shall be made by the committee</p> <p>Selection activities in communities should be complete in enough time for students to return home before dark</p> | <p>Student selection is done fairly, based on merit and SEGA mission</p> <p>Transparent process ensured</p> <p>Students return home safely, and before dark</p> | Headmistress through Selection Committee Head |
| All programs on Campus | <p>No staff person shall be alone with a SEGA student anywhere on campus, or unless with permission from the Headmistress (eg Counseling cases).</p> <p>Consultation time will be set up where students can consult teachers, in a public place (ie dining banda) with others in that area.</p> <p>No exchange of text messages, phone calls or other media between SEGA staff/Board members/Affiliates and students except matron, nurse and Education For Life staff corresponding</p> | Healthy boundaries between staff and students | Headmistress through Deputy Master |

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| | <p>with students for counselling services, career development.</p> <p>All staff shall be trained on appropriate boundaries, and communication with students, once yearly and reminded of SEGA Policies</p> | | |
| Field Trips | <p>Female staff must attend student field trips</p> <p>Where male staff are present, they must be accommodated in a separate hotel than the rest of the group. The Headmistress, when approving field trip plans, ensures this plan is in place</p> <p>No road travel to take place after dark. School bus must leave early.</p> <p>A student leader should be assigned to help monitor student behavior and adherence by all to the policy</p> | <p>Healthy boundaries between staff and students</p> <p>Students arrive at destination safely</p> | Headmistress through Deputy Master |
| Students travelling to and from SEGA | <p>Students who are travelling home to other districts outside of Morogoro Town from SEGA shall be facilitated by the Parents to travel as a group (by location). Bus tickets shall be procured in advance. Bus Driver's name and contacts will be secured, and Bus Driver agrees to contact Headmistress and Parent Representative upon arrival to destination. Parent committees in each destination designate a contact person to coordinate transfers to and from school for the group</p> <p>Parent representative from each geographic location receiving students will be provided with Bus Driver's contacts.</p> <p>No road travel to take place after dark. Students need to leave early.</p> <p>Students travelling to Morogoro town or nearby areas, should be escorted by guardians.</p> <p>While sometimes students may be turned away if their school fees are in arrears, this must be done so</p> | Students arrive safely | Headmistress through Matron |

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| | <p>only in adherence to the above guidelines (no travel at night; no travel without guardian unless permission granted, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whenever a student enters the school, as part of the Enrollment contract parents will sign that they are aware of the fee payment schedule and that students will be turned away if their fees are not paid. • In such cases, the School shall provide transport money for the trip home. • Students shall wait/reside inside school premises until travel plans are secured. | | |
| Kitchen & Garden | <p>Students shall not carry pots of boiling or hot water</p> <p>Students shall not engage in cooking</p> <p>Students should be trained in the use of any garden tools (ie machetes, pangas, irons,) before use</p> | Accidents, burns, cuts, etc. avoided | Headmistress through Matron |
| Infirmary | Students should take medicine at dispensary only. | Effective use of medicine and safety of students. | Headmistress through Matron and Nurse. |
| Dormitory | <p>Dormitories are not to be locked from the outside at night.</p> <p>Please add appropriate measures here to ensure protection in case of fire;</p> | Safety of students during emergencies e.g. Fire outbreak. | Headmistress through Head of Security |
| Hiring of Staff | <p>References to be checked by telephone (employers often will not say anything negative in writing, but are freer in person or on phone, verbally)</p> <p>Induction of staff to take place, and include orientation to this policy</p> <p>All staff to sign policies</p> | | Headmistress through Head of Hiring Committee/HR Person |
| Staff Training | Staff to be trained in Child Protection issues each | | School Manager |

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| | year | | |
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5. Roles of Staff in Preventing and Responding to Abuse

5.1 Roles and Responsibilities of All Staff

Sometimes staff or volunteers may suspect or be aware that a SEGA student (or other beneficiary) is being abused or exploited, at home, school, or elsewhere.

Your duty as a staff is to:

- If possible, record in writing any concerns you have. Include:
 - Observations, with time and date
 - What was said and by whom, using the person's words
 - What action has been taken, by whom and when
- Alert the SEGA Counselor, or Headmistress immediately

All staff are responsible—if you know something or suspect something you have a duty to report it.

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| Together We Keep SEGA and our Students Safe |
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5.2 Role of the Headmistress

5.2.1 In General

Work closely with the SEGA Manager and Child Protection designated Officer at SEGA to Ensure that:

1. all staff are aware of, have access to, and have signed full copies of this policy
2. all staff receive child protection training (See Sections 7 & 8 below)
3. all students are aware (See Section 9 below)
4. all staff are recruited and employed in accordance with the guidelines identified in the Employment Policy (See Section 7 below)
5. all parents are informed about SEGA's Child Protection Policy and sign a statement supporting it

5.2.2 In Specific Instances

Where abuse or exploitation of a student/students is suspected, the Headmistress:

- Ensures the needs, rights and safety of SEGA girl(s) come first
- Documents/put in writing what she has learned about the incident
- Inform the School Board, Police and NM immediately
- Enlists the support of and Delegates the issue to the Counselor who will provide appropriate follow-up to ensure emotional, physical health and well-being of the girl
- Work with the Counselor after facts have been gathered, to inform the Child's Family; and Continue to update the family as appropriate

There may be times when those with parental responsibility may not be initially informed. This may happen when:

- the parent or caregiver is the alleged perpetrator
- it is possible that the child may be intimidated into silence
- there is a strong likelihood that evidence will be destroyed

5.2.3 Regarding Allegations of Child Abuse by Staff

In cases where a SEGA staff, volunteer, or associate is suspected of having abused a child entrusted to SEGA's care, or within a community where SEGA is working etc., the handling of the case will affect the welfare of the student in question and potentially all other students now and in future. For these reasons, disciplinary actions are also discussed in this document.

If a SEGA staff, volunteer or associate is suspected, the Headmistress role is as follows:

- 1) Ensures the needs, rights and safety of SEGA girl(s) come first
- 2) Document /put in writing everything learned so far about the issue
- 3) Consult the Policy to identify which rules have been broken;
- 4) Alert the School Board Chair; and SEGA Manager for action

The School Board will have the role of conducting an investigation about the alleged incident and bring the issue to the attention of the SEGA board, along with recommended appropriate disciplinary action. It is not the responsibility of the Headmistress to carry out the investigation.

5.3 Role of the Counselor / Designated Person for Child Protection

5.3.1 In General

6. Ensure the needs and rights of children come first
7. Ensure that all staff know how to appropriately speak with and interact with girls or children entrusted to SEGA's care or affected by SEGA's work
8. Maintain a current awareness of any of the children identified as potentially having been abused, and make sure these children get support, ensuring confidentiality
9. Ensure these records are kept separate from student's records for the purpose of confidentiality.
10. Consult with and inform the Headmistress and SEGA Manager regarding all child protection concerns.

5.3.2 In Specific Instances

11. Ensure the needs and rights of children come first
12. Provide individual counseling to a girl suspected or confirmed as having been abused/exploited, to identify appropriate steps to help her. This may include:
 - a. Emotional support
 - b. Counseling her about contacting her parent/guardian where appropriate

- c. Facilitating Health/medical checks if physical/sexual abuse or exploitation has occurred (pregnancy, disease)
- 13. Identify local community resources to assist, where relevant (Local Chairperson, Social Welfare, etc.)
- 14. Ensure and safeguard clear, confidential, detailed and dated records on all child protection cases including:
 - a. all available information relating to the cause for concern
 - b. action taken
 - c. description of decision points, including when it has been decided not to make a notification to parents, Social Welfare, Local leadership or other relevant authority if these have not been notified for any reason
- 15. Support the Headmistress with appropriate information, to inform the child's family
- 16. Support the family where relevant, to know their rights and the role of law enforcement

Note: At times a child is unable to speak for or protect themselves. Therefore SEGA has a greater responsibility to know when and how to share appropriate information with parents and external agencies, to protect the safety and wellbeing of children.

5.3.3 Role of Counselor Regarding Allegations of Child Abuse by Staff

The Counselor's paramount responsibility is to ensure rights and protection of the children in SEGA's care/contact come first, implementing the actions outlined above. It is not the responsibility of the Counselor to carry out an investigation.

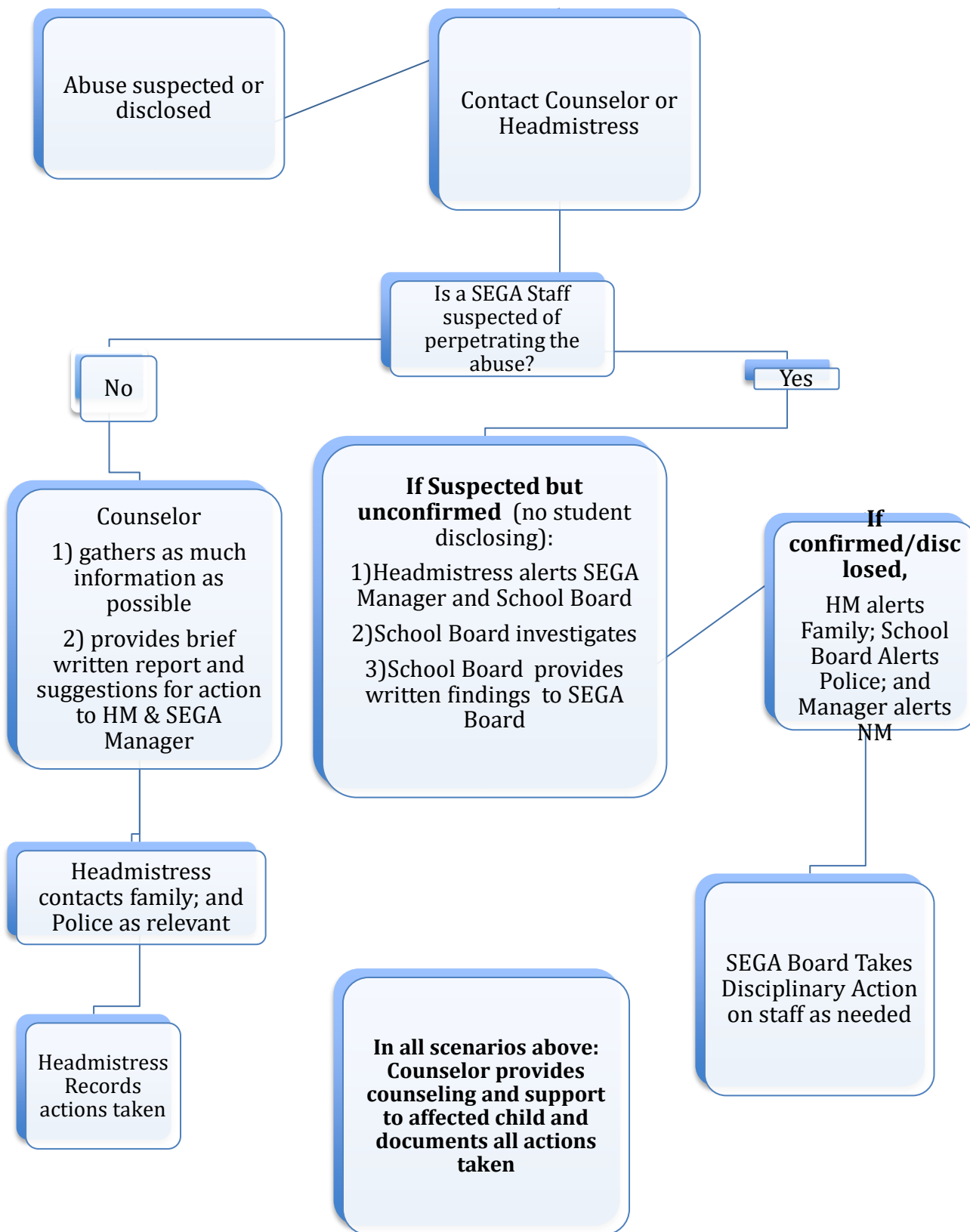
5.4 Role of the School Board

- Ensure needs and rights of children come first
- Investigate any allegations against SEGA staff and recommend disciplinary action to SEGA Board
- Inform the Headmistress immediately should any member of the Board be aware of a concern for the wellbeing and safety of a child who attends SEGA
- School Board will need special orientation/training on this

5.5 Role of SEGA Board

- Implement disciplinary action against staff who have breached any policies
- Inform SEGA Donor/partner *(NM) if a child has been exploited, abused or otherwise harmed while under SEGA's care
- Inform police or authorities where laws have been broken and provide information to support
- Represent the organization if any legal action occurs against SEGA

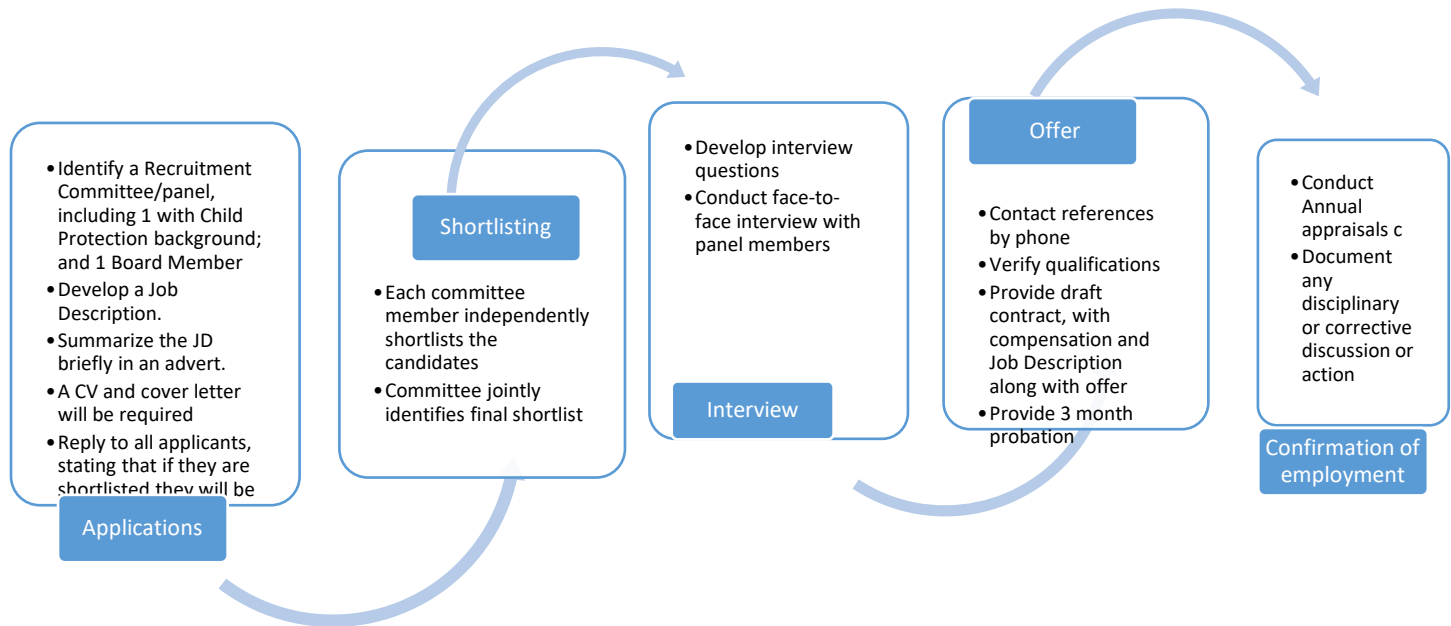
SEGA's Response to Child Abuse Allegations: Summary of Roles



6. Procedures for Recruitment of Staff at SEGA

6.1 Process for Recruitment

All appointments (permanent, fixed term, student, casual or volunteer) to positions that have direct and/or frequent contact with children or young people will be conditional on reference checks. The following chart outlines the process for recruitment of staff:



6.2 Induction of New Personnel

- All new long-term personnel will receive child protection training as part of their induction. (Both paid staff, part-time and full-time, and Long-term Volunteers are included in this definition of 'personnel'; Long-term means 1 year or more)
- Training will be conducted in January of each year
- All new staff will be given a copy of this policy as part of the induction process and will sign the policy and initial each page.
 - Some Volunteers or staff may be present short term and it may not be possible to engage them in a full child-protection training. But all, regardless of duration of their assignment, shall be provided and sign the policy

7. Training of Staff

All staff will be given appropriate training covering basic awareness of child protection. This will include an overview of signs and indicators of abuse, and also the procedure for responding to actual or suspected abuse. This training will include:

- Roles and responsibility of staff regarding child protection
- Recognizing and responding to the signs and indicators of actual or suspected abuse
- Ensuring staff understand and can follow the Child Protection Policy and the procedures for reporting a concern

All staff will receive updated training every three years as a minimum with outside support; and every year internally, by the Counselor together with other designated SEGA staff/board members.

Supervisory staff are to be trained/oriented on SEGA's Human Resources Policies, including how to document any disciplinary issues or corrective discussions; issuing of warnings etc.

7.1 Guidelines for Staff on Interacting with Students

- A relationship between an adult and a child or young person cannot be a relationship between equals. There is a potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable young people. Adults have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.
- Adults should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. Adults who work with children must act in a way that is considered to be safe practice.
- Communication between children and adults, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries.
- Adults should not share information of a private, personal or intimate nature with a child or young person. General information necessary for healthy mentoring within a professional Teacher-Student interaction is allowed. If any teacher/staff has any doubt about what is OK, they should consult their Supervisor.
- Adults should not request or respond to, any personal information from the young person other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role.

- Adults should ensure that all communications with students are transparent and open to scrutiny.
- All staff are expected to behave in manners consistent with the SEGA Code of Conduct.
- All staff must sign the following page, and it will be put in their file:

7.2 SEGA Staff Policies Reminder

The following activities are prohibited and considered as misconduct, subject to early termination of contract and potential prosecution under the Laws of the Government of Tanzania.

Gross Misconduct

B. Regarding Interactions with Students:

- Sexual advances, harassment or relationships with students regardless if during school days or breaks; regardless if on or off campus
- Being alone with a student anywhere (unless permitted by the Headmistress)
- Use of inappropriate language (swearing, abusive, sexual in nature) or sharing deeply personal issues with students; Failing to maintain professional distance
- Providing gifts of money or any other item to students, unless authorized by and provided through Head of School
- Exchanging text messages, phone calls, or any other form of communication to a student outside of School and outside of Teacher-Student professional interaction
- Teacher, or other staff person/Board Member/SEGA Affiliate receiving a student into his or her home without prior permission from Headmistress
- Failure to report inappropriate behavior by a student to your supervisor or the Headmistress

Signature

Date

Preventing Child Abuse Within SEGA:

8. Training of Students

SEGA's Child Protection designated Officer (Counselor) will facilitate regular trainings each year to girls children protect themselves by teaching them skills in these four areas:

- (a) knowing SEGA and Government policies; and their rights
- (b) recognizing unsafe and sexually abusive situations and touches,
- (c) assertively refusing sexually abusive situations and touches whenever possible
- (d) immediately reporting these situations to adults, and through SEGA's system

Training shall include:

- Review of Government and SEGA policies including system for reporting
- Participatory discussions and brainstorms of types of situations students may face; and role-plays for practicing responses

What Students Should do in cases of Harassment or Abuse

Students have a role in protecting themselves and their fellow students from abuse. If you, or your friend is being harassed or abused, please take action to help.

- Verbally tell an adult you trust such as the SEGA Matron, Class Teacher, Counselor or Headmistress;
- If it is hard for you to tell an adult, write down what has happened to you and put it in the Suggestion Box at SEGA; or deliver to the Counselor or Headmistress personally
- If there is an accusation against a staff person, please know that it will be difficult for the School to take action unless you sign your name. If you sign your name, know that your situation will be treated confidentially

Ensure Students Have Access to and Know SEGA's Policies

In addition to training, the following shall be implemented

- The Headmistress shall ensure an "Anonymous Suggestion Box" is placed in the Administrative Block near the Headmistress' office; Dining Hall and behind Form II building. The Headmistress shall open the boxes each week.
- Student Rules shall be posted in Admin building, on all classroom blocks, SEGA Bulletin Boards
- Student Rules shall be read to all students at the beginning of each term
- Student Rules shall be signed by all students upon enrolment at the beginning of each school year

9. Legal Context for this Policy

This policy has been written in accordance with the following legislation:

- Tanzanian Law of the Child Act 2009
- Sexual Offenses Special Provisions Act, 1998
- Marriage Act 1971 with its amendments
- Education Act 1978 and its amendments
- UN Rights of the Child
- Child Act 2009

9.1 Definitions and Important Legal Points

As per the laws of Tanzania, (Sexual Offenses Special Provisions Act, 1998):

- | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The legal definition of a “child” in Tanzania is anyone under 18 years old;• Anyone who disrupts school attendance of an enrolled student even above 18 years violates the law (Education Act 1978:35).• If a man has sex with a girl (With or without consent) who is under age 18 in Tanzania, he has committed the offense of rape. |
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- **Position of Authority:** A man who is in a position of authority (ie a Teacher, non-teaching staff, Guard, Healer, Religious Leader etc.) who takes advantage of his official position to have sex with a girl under 18 is liable to imprisonment for a minimum of 30 years
- **Verbal Sexual Assault:** Any person who, with intent to cause sexual annoyance to any person, utters any word or sound, makes any gesture or exhibits any word or object intending that such word or sound shall be heard, or the gesture or object shall be seen, by that other person, commits an offense of sexual assault and is liable to imprisonment for 5 years.
- **Money and Gifts:** Any person who gives monetary consideration, goods or other benefits to a girl with intent to procure sex is liable to imprisonment for 5 years

10. Special Considerations for Specific Types of Abuse

10.1 Child-on-Child Harmful Behaviours

Children can abuse children. These behaviours are outside of what may be considered the normal range, and can extend to bullying, violence or sexual assault. Therefore when a child alleges inappropriate harmful behaviour by another child, then the child protection procedures outlined in this policy must be considered for both the children.

10.2 Suicidal Concerns or Self-Harming Behaviours

If a child identifies thoughts of suicide, or self-harming behaviour (cutting or other), this must be immediately notified to the Counselor and Headmistress. If immediate action is required the Counselor or Headmistress should in turn contact relevant support services {mental health team at local hospital}.

11. Child Protection Policy – Appendix

11. 1 Definitions of Abuse

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effect on the child's emotional development. This can include a pattern of rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child. It may also include age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It also includes the seeing or hearing the ill treatment of others.

Physical Indicators:

- Bed wetting or bed soiling with no medical cause
- Extreme weight gain or weight loss
- Frequent psychosomatic complaints (e.g. headaches, nausea, abdominal pains)
- Non-organic failure to thrive
- Pale, emaciated
- Prolonged vomiting and/or diarrhoea
- Malnutrition
- Dressed differently to other children in the family

Behavioural Indicators:

- a. Severe developmental lags with obvious physical cause
- b. Depression, anxiety, withdrawal or aggression
- c. Self-destructive behaviour. This can include self-harm, suicide, alcohol and drug abuse
- d. Overly compliant
- e. Extreme attention seeking behaviours or extreme inhibition
- f. Running away from home, avoiding attending at school
- g. Nightmares, poor sleeping patterns
- h. Anti-social behaviours
- i. Lack of self esteem
- j. Obsessive behaviours
- k. Eating disorders
- l. Self harm / cutting or other forms

Caregiver Indicators:

- Treats the child differently from siblings or peers in ways that suggest dislike for the child
- Actively refuses to help the child
- Constantly threatens the child with physical harm or death
- Locks the child in a closet or room for extended periods of time
- Teaches or reinforces criminal behaviour
- Withholds physical and verbal affection
- Keeps the child at home in role of servant or surrogate parent
- Has unrealistic expectations of child
- Involves child in adult issues such as separation or disputed over child's care
- Exposes child to witnessing situations of arguing and violence in the home

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, causing long term serious harm to the child's health or development. It may also include neglect of a child's basic or emotional needs. Neglect is a lack: of action, emotion or basic needs.

Physical Indicators:

- Dressed inappropriately for the season or the weather
- Often extremely dirty and unwashed
- Severe nappy rash or other persistent skin disorders
- Inadequately supervised or left unattended frequently or for long periods
- May be left in the care of an inappropriate adult
- Does not receive adequate medical or dental care
- Malnourished - this can be both underweight and overweight
- Lacks adequate shelter
- Non-organic failure to thrive

Behavioural Indicators:

- Severe developmental lags without an obvious physical cause
- Lack of attachment to parents/caregivers
- Indiscriminate attachment to other adults
- Poor school attendance and performance
- Demanding of affection and attention
- Engages in risk taking behaviour such as drug and alcohol abuse
- May steal food
- Poor social skills
- No understanding of basic hygiene

Caregiver Indicators:

- Puts own need ahead of child's
- Fails to provide child's basic needs
- Demonstrates little or no interest in child's life - does not attend school activities, social events
- Leaves the child alone or inappropriately supervised
- Drug and alcohol use
- Depressed

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is a non-accidental act on a child that results in physical harm. This includes, but is not limited to, beating, hitting, shaking, burning, drowning, suffocating, biting, poisoning or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical abuse also involves the fabrication or inducing of illness.

Physical Indicators (often unexplained or inconsistent with explanation given):

- Bruises, welts, cuts and abrasions
- Burns - small circular burns, immersion burns, rope burns etc
- Fractures and dislocations - skull, facial bones, spinal fractures etc
- Multiple fractures at different stages of healing
- Fractures in very young children

Behavioural Indicators:

- Inconsistent or vague explanations regarding injuries
- Wary of adults or a particular person
- Vacant stare or frozen watchfulness
- Cringing or flinching if touches unexpectedly
- May be extremely compliant and eager to please
- Dresses inappropriately to hide bruising or injuries
- Runs away from home or is afraid to go home
- May regress (e.g. bedwetting)
- May indicate general sadness
- Could have vision or hearing delay
- Is violent to other children or animals

Caregiver Indicators:

- Inconsistent or vague explanations regarding injuries
- May appear unconcerned about child's wellbeing
- May state the child is prone to injuries or lies about how they occur
- Delays in seeking medical attention

- May take the child to multiple medical appointments and seek medical treatment without an obvious need

Sexual Abuse

Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities (penetrative and non-penetrative, for example, rape, kissing, touching, masturbation) as well as non-contact acts such as involving children in the looking at or production of sexual images, sexual activities and sexual behaviours.

Physical Indicators:

- Unusual or excessive itching or pain in the genital or anal area
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- Bruises, lacerations, redness, swelling or bleeding in genital, vaginal or anal area
- Blood in urine or stools
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Pregnancy
- Urinary tract infections
- Discomfort in sitting or fidgeting as unable to sit comfortably

Behavioural Indicators:

- Age-inappropriate sexual play or language
- Bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge
- Refuses to go home, or to a specific person's home, for no apparent reason
- Fear of a certain person
- Depression, anxiety, withdrawal or aggression
- Self-destructive behaviour. This can include self-harm, suicide, alcohol and drug abuse
- Overly compliant
- Extreme attention seeking behaviours or extreme inhibition
- Dresses inappropriately to hide bruising or injuries
- Eating disorders
- Compulsive behaviours

Caregiver Indicators:

- May be unusually over-protective of the child
- Accuses the child of being sexually provocative
- Misuses alcohol or drugs
- Invades the child's privacy (e.g. during dressing, in the bathroom)
- May favour the victim over other children

12. Child Protection Policy – Appendix

12.1 Responding to Child Abuse

Guidelines for responding when a child tells of his or her abuse

It is important that you as the adult remain calm and confident when a child tells you what has been happening to him or her. Every child is different in how, when and where they will tell an adult about abusive experiences so it will most likely happen when you are least expecting it! Your facial expressions and your tone of voice are as important as what you actually say to the child.

Stay calm, listen, **reassure** the child and at times you may need to **clarify** what the child has said so that you can take the appropriate action. If a child sees that you are upset or not able to cope with what he or she is telling you he or she may not continue to tell you what has been happening or take back (i.e. retract) the original statements they have made.

DO

- Listen, allow the child to tell as much as they want without interrupting (remember listening is not questioning)
- Respond reassuringly to the child
- If you do ask a question avoid asking leading questions, ask only open questions that seek clarification so that you can decide what action you need to take
- Most importantly “BELIEVE WHAT THEY SAY”
- Document what the child said and the responses that you made and any clarifying questions asked (word for word and remember to put the date, time, place and who was present)

DON'T

- Question in a way that introduces words, phrases, people's names or concepts
- Indicate that you disbelieve the child
- Try to correct, confront, change, challenge or influence what they say
- Respond by saying “You should have told me sooner” or “Why did you let him