

CENTER *for* REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Department: HR
Published Date: 11/12/24

PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (PSEA) POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Policy ownership: Chief People and Culture Officer

Applicability: This policy applies to all Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR or the Center) employees and related personnel, including staff members (defined below), consultants, contracted workers, Board members and volunteers (“Center Affiliated Persons”).

Policy: Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) is unacceptable behavior and prohibited conduct for all Center Affiliated Persons. The Center has a policy of zero tolerance towards SEA. All Center Affiliated Persons must report any suspected instances of sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Center shall create and maintain a safe environment, free from SEA, by taking appropriate measures to implement this Policy, internally and in connection with the Center’s programmatic work. The Center also shall ensure that roles, responsibilities and expected standards of conduct in relation to SEA are known within the organization.

Procedures Table of Contents

Introduction.....	p. 2
Scope.....	p. 2
Definitions of Key Terms.....	p. 2
Zero Tolerance.....	p. 4
Non-Discrimination.....	p. 4
Specific Acts and Behaviors Prohibited.....	p. 4
Roles and Responsibilities.....	p. 5
Trainings and Certification.....	p. 6
Reporting Process and Investigation Procedures.....	p. 6
Confidentiality.....	p. 7
Support for Survivors.....	p. 7
Disciplinary Measures.....	p. 7
Prohibited Retaliation.....	p. 7
Contact.....	p. 7

INTRODUCTION

The Center for Reproductive Rights (“the Center” or “CRR”) is committed to safeguarding all people—particularly women, children, vulnerable adults, and individuals with whom we work— from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) in all its forms. The Center maintains a zero-tolerance policy and approach to SEA by Center Affiliated Persons.

This document outlines the Center’s approach and responsibilities to protect people from SEA. It also outlines SEA reporting and investigation processes. Together, the Center’s PSEA Policy and procedures affirm the Center’s commitment to the United Nations Secretary General’s Bulletin on Special Measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13).

The Center’s PSEA Policy is complemented by other Center policies and procedures that safeguard individuals with whom we work. They include the Center’s Code of Conduct, the Center’s Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons Policy, and the Center’s policy on Non-Discrimination Anti-Harassment and Anti-Retaliation. The Center’s reporting and investigation processes concerning PSEA also work in tandem with other Center processes, including its [Global Reporting Guidelines](#).

SCOPE

The Center’s PSEA Policy applies to all Center Affiliated Persons, which means that all Center Affiliated Persons are prohibited from SEA and have an obligation to report actual or suspected incidents of SEA. The Center’s PSEA Policy applies worldwide, including to the Center’s offices in Colombia, Kenya, Switzerland, the United States and other places where the Center maintains staff or engages in programmatic work, for example, Asia.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

It is imperative that everyone shares a common understanding of sexual exploitation and abuse and other child and adult abuse safeguarding principles and terminology. To that end, the following definitions—listed alphabetically—support a common understanding of this policy.

Beneficiaries: Beneficiaries are people with whom Center Affiliated Persons interact with directly as part of carrying out a Center project.

Center/CRR partners: Partners are organizations (other than law firms) with which the Center is engaged to carry out programmatic work.

Center/CRR staff: Center Staff includes employees (whether employed directly or through a third-party), fellows, and interns paid and unpaid.

Child(ren): For the purpose of this policy, a child is defined as anyone under the age of eighteen (18) years, regardless of the local age of consent and/or maturity.

Child abuse: Child abuse includes all forms of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as neglect or negligent treatment. Some of the most common types of child abuse are: (1) physical violence toward or deliberate injury of a child; (2) neglect, or the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and psychological needs; (3) sexual abuse, which involves using a child for sexual stimulation or gratification, and (4) emotional abuse, which harms a child’s self-esteem.

Child marriage: Child marriage includes formal and informal unions in which one or both parties are under the age of 18, regardless of local laws.

Child sexual exploitation: Child sexual exploitation involves children receiving a form of benefits (including gifts, money, or affection) in exchange for engaging in sexual activities.

Coercion: Coercion includes a spectrum of degrees of force, such as physical force, psychological intimidation, blackmail, or other threats, including threats related to not obtaining or retaining employment. Coercion may also occur when a person is unable to give consent; for example, while asleep, intoxicated, or mentally incapable of understanding the situation.

Consultants: “Consultants” refer to individuals or entities who perform work for the Center or in connection with a Center project under a professional consulting services contract, in accordance with the Center’s Professional Consulting Services Policy and Procedures.

Grooming: Grooming is behavior that an offender uses to procure sexual activity from a child, including by building trust with children directly, and/or with their caregivers, to sexually abuse them. In some cases, a person may send electronic messages to a child with the goal of engaging the child in sexual activity; this is called “online grooming.”

Projects: For the purpose of this policy, “projects” refers to all of the Center’s programmatic work other than legal representation, which may or may not be implemented through donor awards. As legal representation is governed by its own code of legal and ethical responsibilities, it shall be excluded from the definition of a “project.”

Safeguarding: Safeguarding refers to reasonable steps necessary to protect people (especially vulnerable adults and children) from harm (particularly sexual exploitation and abuse) and responding appropriately when harm occurs. Safeguarding applies across programs and to all personnel and partners. It requires proactively identifying, preventing, and guarding against all risks of harm, exploitation, and abuse by having mature, accountable, and transparent systems for incident reporting, response, and learning. Systems must be survivor-centered and protect those accused until the investigation procedures are concluded. The Center places impact populations and affected persons at the center of our safeguarding approach.

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse includes the actual as well as threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Sexual exploitation: Sexual exploitation includes any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. This definition includes any exchange or withholding of money, material assistance, employment, goods, or services for sexual favors or other forms of sexually humiliating, degrading, or exploitive behaviors.

Survivor: For the purpose of this policy, a survivor is any person who claims to have been subjected to abuse or exploitation by a Center Affiliated Person. Note: We frequently employ the term “survivor” rather than “victim” to imply strength, resilience, and the capacity to survive. However, it is the individual’s choice as to how they wish to identify.

Vulnerable adult: An individual 18 years or older who—due to age, capacity, disability, illness (physical, mental, or similar), or other condition—may be unable to independently care for themselves or protect themselves against abuse, harm, or exploitation. This also includes those who—due to some aspect of their identity or circumstance, including but not limited to their gender

identity, health status, ethnicity, religious identity, sexual orientation, economic or social status, or as a result of disasters and conflicts—are at additional risk of abuse or exploitation.

ZERO TOLERANCE

CRR has zero tolerance for any violations of its PSEA Policy. We commit to:

- Ensuring that any concern related to SEA is taken seriously and promptly investigated.
- Taking appropriate action against any Center Affiliated Person found to have violated the Center's PSEA Policy, up to and including termination or possible legal action.
- Building a culture of dignity and respect where Center Affiliated Persons and any beneficiaries of the Center's programmatic work are encouraged and provided the means to report actual or suspected incidents of SEA.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Center is committed to safeguarding beneficiaries regardless of their age, disability, nationality, culture, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, religious or political belief, socio-economic status, family or criminal background, physical or mental health, or any other protected status.

SPECIFIC ACTS AND BEHAVIORS PROHIBITED

All forms of sexual exploitation and abuse are prohibited. For purposes of the Center's PSEA Policy and procedures, SEA is broadly defined.

For the avoidance of doubt, Center Affiliated Persons are prohibited from engaging in these specific acts and behaviors:

- **Child marriage:** Marrying a child (defined above) is a prohibited act of SEA under the Center's PSEA Policy, unless such marriage was in accordance with local customs or laws and entered into before an individual became a Center Affiliated Person and/or before the Center's policy came into force.
- **Sexual activity with any children and vulnerable adults:** Sexual activity with a child (defined above) is prohibited. Center Affiliated Persons are also prohibited from engaging in sexual activity with a vulnerable person who are recipients of the Center's programmatic work and with whom they interact during their work on behalf of the Center. The age of majority or age of consent locally is irrelevant, as is a mistaken belief that the child is of the age of consent.
- **Abuse of power for sexual activity with individuals involved in Center work or activities:** Due to the nature of our work, Center Affiliated Persons may hold power over individuals involved in Center work or activities. Abuse of power for purposes of sexual exploitation is prohibited.
- **Sexual grooming and/or coercion:** Any grooming and/or coercion (defined above) of a child or vulnerable adult for the purposes of obtaining sex is prohibited.

This list does not limit what qualifies as prohibited SEA. The Center uses the definition of SEA set forth in the United Nations in the Secretary General’s Bulletin on Special Measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Below are the roles and responsibilities of Center Affiliated Persons in upholding the Center’s PSEA Policy.

Center Affiliated Persons: All Center Affiliated Persons are prohibited from engaging in SEA and required to report actual or suspected incidents of SEA through appropriate channels (see [Global Reporting Guidelines](#)). You do not need to be certain that SEA is taking place to report, so long as you report the information available to you in good faith.

Executive Team Members and Board Members: The Center’s Executive Team is ultimately accountable for maintaining a work environment where individuals understand how to behave, how to raise complaints and concerns, and what actions will follow. The Center’s Board of Directors has oversight responsibility to ensure that the Executive Team is appropriately discharging these responsibilities.

Office of General Counsel: The Center’s Office of the General Counsel is responsible for interpreting the PSEA Policy and ensuring that any legal requirements concerning SEA are met. The Office of the General Counsel also is responsible for ensuring that reports of actual or suspected PSEA are promptly investigated.

Human Resources: Human Resources shall be responsible for maintaining the PSEA Policy and ensuring that the training and certification requirements under these procedures are met. Human Resources is also responsible for maintaining and administering other policies and procedures that complement the PSEA Policy, including the Code of Conduct and Global Reporting Guidelines. In addition, Human Resources is responsible for ensuring that the Center’s template consultant agreement contains requirements concerning SEA prevention and reporting.

PSEA Coordinator: The PSEA Coordinator, within Human Resources, is responsible for ensuring that Center staff certify that they have received training on the PSEA Policy and procedures. The PSEA Coordinator also is responsible for supporting Program-based Staff with awareness-raising campaigns for program beneficiaries.

Program-based Staff: Center staff who carry out the Center’s programmatic work are responsible for ensuring that they use the correct version of the Center’s template agreements for partners, consultants, or grantees, which contain requirements concerning SEA prevention and reporting. In circumstances where Center-Affiliated Persons interact directly with beneficiaries of a Center program, Program-based Staff will be responsible for ensuring that such beneficiaries are aware of how to report actual or suspected incidents of SEA.

TRAININGS AND CERTIFICATION

The Center will conduct regular trainings on its PSEA Policy, as well as staff responsibilities under these procedures, how to identify potential instances of SEA, and when and how to report concerns. Such trainings will be mandatory for new Center staff, with refresher trainings for all staff on an

annual basis. Center staff also must affirm in writing that they have reviewed the PSEA Policy and will abide by the Policy and these procedures.

REPORTING PROCESS AND INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES

The Center has an established process to address any concerns raised related to SEA and safeguarding of vulnerable persons. The process is an extension of the Center's Global Reporting Guidelines, which establish procedures for reporting violations of Center policies.

The steps for reporting and investigating reports of violations are as follows:

1. Reporting. Any Center Affiliated Person who identifies a concern related to sexual exploitation and abuse by a Center Affiliated Person should report their concern immediately. Reporting may be done through any means set forth in the [Global Reporting Guidelines](#), including by submitting a report via the website: <https://reproductiverights.ethicspoint.com>.

2. Escalation. All reports of actual or suspected SEA must be escalated to the Center's Office of General Counsel as per the Global Reporting Guidelines, regardless of who at the Center initially receives the report. (If the report contains allegations of SEA by a member of the Office of General Counsel, the report must be escalated to the Senior Director of Human Resources. The Senior Director of Human Resources would then carry out the steps assigned to the Office of General Counsel below.) Immediate escalation of any concerns related to SEA is critical to preventing further harm, ensuring that survivors receive appropriate support and referrals, and initiating a prompt investigation.

3. Confirmation. The Center will endeavor to contact the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the report. All complaints will be taken seriously. If the complaint identifies individuals who may have been harmed, the Center will prioritize the safety and well-being of such persons. Measures will be taken to ensure that potential survivors are safeguarded from further harm and, with their consent, referred to appropriate support services.

4. Evaluation. The Office of the General Counsel will evaluate the report to determine, among other things, whether the allegations are suitable for an internal investigation or should be referred to outside counsel, law enforcement, or others. The Office of General Counsel may seek additional information or undertake a preliminary investigation to make this evaluation.

5. Investigation. When an investigation is warranted, the Office of General Counsel will identify the appropriate staff person or persons, or select outside counsel, to conduct the investigation. An investigation may include interviewing and obtaining information directly from the complainant, the alleged perpetrator, and any witnesses or individuals with pertinent information. Individuals involved in any investigation are expected to provide their full cooperation. Any Center Affiliated Person who refuses to participate in a Center inquiry or does not fully cooperate may be subject to disciplinary action. Unauthorized disclosure of confidential aspects of an investigation by a Center Affiliated Person (other than a potential survivor) may subject such persons to disciplinary action.

6. Resolution. When an investigation is complete, the Center to the extent possible and appropriate will notify the individual who made the report and the individual(s) about whom the concern was raised of the outcome. The Center will take corrective actions it determines are warranted considering the investigation's findings.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Center will protect the confidentiality of SEA allegations to the greatest extent possible to ensure the integrity of any investigation. Confidential or sensitive information obtained by the Center during an investigation shall not be disclosed outside of the context of the investigation and the Center's response to it, unless necessary to conduct the investigation, a disclosure obligation exists, or to law enforcement.

While information obtained by the Center during an SEA investigation will be handled as sensitively as possible, CRR cannot guarantee complete confidentiality, because the organization may not be able to conduct an effective investigation without revealing certain information to the alleged perpetrator, potential witnesses, or law enforcement. CRR may share information about allegations of SEA with those with a need to know in order to support the investigation or the Center's response. The Center maintains data security and protection measures to ensure that records relating to SEA allegations are protected from unauthorized disclosure.

SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS

The Center will support Survivors of SEA regardless of the outcome of any investigations. Where appropriate, and with the consent of potential Survivors, this support may include referrals to medical care, psychosocial counseling, legal services, and/or other material assistance.

DISCIPLINARY MEASURES

Any Center Affiliated Person who violates the Center's PSEA policy will face disciplinary procedures. Such procedures may result in termination of employment or contract, and/or referral to the appropriate law enforcement agency or legal authority.

PROHIBITED RETALIATION

Retaliation against any Center Affiliated Person who makes a good-faith complaint of an actual or suspected violation of the Center's PSEA policy is prohibited. Retaliation also will not be tolerated against anyone who assists, testifies, or participates in any investigation or proceeding.

Complaints of retaliation will be promptly investigated. If retaliation is substantiated, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken, including possible dismissal.

CONTACT

If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact the Office of the General Counsel or Human Resources.