

SAFEGUARDING OF VULNERABLE PERSONS POLICY

**Mezinárodní vězeňské společenství, z.s.
(Prison Fellowship Czech Republic)**



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1. Introduction

1.1 Aim

Mezinárodní vězeňské společenství (MVS) contributes positively to building a strong and safe community and recognizes the right of every individual client and their family to be protected from abuse. The aim of this Policy is to set out MVS's commitment to safeguard and protect vulnerable people in our work and to provide a clear protocol and framework for safeguarding vulnerable people.

The aim of these Policy is also to ensure that our employees, volunteers, and partner organizations provide appropriate and effective protection whenever concerns arise about the welfare or safety of vulnerable persons, or if an incident has been reported, to take appropriate measures to protect and support anyone affected.

1.2 Our commitment

MVS acknowledges that "prisons" and "facilities for juvenile offenders" are "specific places" defined by law and that every juvenile or adult in any of these facilities is a vulnerable person. However, we also consider any other client who is not serving a custodial sentence, but with whom MVS works within any project as a vulnerable person. These include not only convicts but also victims, released individuals, and families and children of all.

Special attention needs to be paid, particularly to children who are dependent on adults, as they are more susceptible to physical and psychological traumas and have their own needs that must be met to ensure their healthy growth and development. Every child is entitled to rights and as such has the right to be protected, as well as the right to protect themselves and others.

Therefore, we will prioritize the safety and protection of our clients. We will encourage them to be confident and assertive in their relationship with us. We will cultivate a trustworthy and respectful relationship with them while providing a safe environment so they know they are protected, listened to, and will receive assistance. In order to achieve this, MVS will carry out the following:

- During the recruitment of all employees and volunteers with any responsibility for children, young people, and vulnerable adults, their suitability will be assessed through appropriate screening procedures.
- All employees and volunteers with any responsibility or contact with clients and their families will be trained in accordance with our principles and practices focused on the protection of vulnerable persons and safety during recruitment.
- Immediate action will be taken in response to any complaint or report indicating that a client or their family members may have been harmed, and cooperation will be provided with the relevant institution and authority during the investigation.
- Support will be offered to any child or young person (and their parents, guardian, or legal representative) or adult client who informs us that they have suffered abuse in any form, and they will be referred to an appropriate support source.
- Any abuse of power will be reported, regardless of the person in a position of trust during any work with vulnerable individuals.

- We will monitor current legal regulations, guidelines, and recognized best practices for the protection of vulnerable persons and ensure that all relevant policies and procedures are regularly updated.

1.3 Duty of care

We are aware of our commitment and obligation to care for the protection of children, young people, and vulnerable adults with whom we work, and to collaborate with partner organizations to ensure that effective protective measures are implemented to support the safety of vulnerable individuals in their care. We will respond to any concerns and suspicions that may arise. These Principles and other supportive principles, procedures, and guidelines created for this purpose will provide a framework to assist our employees and volunteers in emphasizing practices and standards for the protection of vulnerable persons in their work.

2. Definitions

2.1 Duty of care of vulnerable persons

The protection of vulnerable individuals includes everything an organization must do to ensure that children, young people, and vulnerable adults are safe, including minimizing the risk of harm and accidents and taking steps to address safety concerns. Protection involves integrating procedures throughout the entire organization to ensure the safety of children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

2.2 Client

In this Policy, a "client" refers to a child, young person, or adult with whom MVS works within its projects. This includes victims, prisoners, released individuals, and families, and children of all.

2.3 Child and a minor

Anyone under the age of 18 is considered a child or a minor, and anyone aged 18 and older is considered an adult.

2.4 Vulnerable adult

A vulnerable adult is anyone aged 18 and older who is a convicted prisoner, a released prisoner, a victim, a caregiver of a child with a convicted parent, a family member of a convicted individual, or otherwise a vulnerable client of MVS.

2.5 Abuse

Abuse is any selfish behavior that causes oppression and harm, exploitation, and the misuse of power by those in authority over an individual or group of individuals. It can be perpetrated by individuals causing harm or by individuals who fail to prevent harm. Abuse is not limited to any socioeconomic group, gender, or culture. It can take various forms, and common examples of abuse that workers and volunteers may encounter include:

- **Sex abuse** - It includes a child or young person who is forced or manipulated into participating in sexual activity or observing it. Participation may involve physical or virtual (online/electronic) involvement. It is not necessary for the child or young person to be aware that the activity is sexual, and explicit consent from the child is irrelevant.
- **Physical abuse** - It causes physical harm to the person. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, etc. It can be intentional or due to negligence, or it may result from failing to prevent injury.
- **Emotional abuse** - It occurs where there is consistent emotional abuse or rejection. It has serious and negative effects on the behavior and emotional development of the child, young person, or vulnerable adult, leading to low self-esteem. In all forms of abuse, there is a certain level of emotional abuse present.
- **Bullying** - It is the behavior of an individual or group that is repeated over time and intentionally injures another individual or group physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (e.g.,

cyberbullying through text messages, digital images, or the internet) and is often motivated by prejudice against specific groups based on their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

- **Neglect** - Neglect is the persistent or severe failure to meet the basic physical and psychological needs of a child or young person, leading to serious impairment of their health or development. Neglect can also involve inadequate supervision of the child or young person's safety.
- **Financial (or material) abuses** - Abuse of property and financial resources. It can involve taking items or money from a vulnerable person without their consent or the consent of their legal guardian, or any other unauthorized use of a vulnerable person's belongings or funds.
- **Parents who are themselves vulnerable adults** - It often happens that the parents of children who are abused or neglected are themselves vulnerable adults. Mental health issues, domestic violence, and substance abuse (i.e. drugs and alcohol) are particularly common, often occurring in combination.
- **Female genital mutilation** – It is a criminal offense, and any indication that it is being attempted or has been committed, upon which MVS becomes aware, will be reported to the Child Welfare Authorities (OSPOD) or the police.
- **Trafficking** - It refers to the transportation of children and adults into a country, sometimes outside of the regular immigration process, for various illegal purposes, which may include domestic servitude, illegal adoption, organ harvesting, welfare benefits claims, or prostitution.
- **Sexual exploitation** - Children can be exploited by receiving rewards for engaging in sexual activities. The abuse may involve the use of the internet and other media technologies. Violence, coercion, and intimidation are common. Regardless of any inappropriate behavior, exploited children should be seen as victims of child sexual abuse, not as criminals.
- **Forced marriage and honor-based violence** - Information about actual or potential forced marriages should not be considered a family matter and should not be disclosed to family members. It is necessary to contact local Child Welfare Authorities (OSPOD) or the police.

3. Contact of MVS employees and volunteers with clients

Within the projects of MVS, contact with vulnerable individuals occurs in person, over the phone, via correspondence, or online. The contact can be both direct and indirect (social workers, legal guardians, relatives, teachers, etc.).

Direct contact with incarcerated individuals most commonly occurs through correspondence (mentoring-letter writing) or in person in prisons (group courses such as "Prisoner's Journey" and "Preparation for Release"), and occasionally over the phone (mentoring) in exceptional cases.

Direct contact with released individuals most commonly occurs over the phone (mentoring) and in person (meetings with released individuals at the Club 2 Fish, individual or group mentoring).

Direct contact with children most commonly occurs in person (leisure meetings at Angel Clubs and Dream Academy, residential Angel Camps or weekend outings, tutoring, one-day events in prisons such as Day With My Child), as well as over the phone (Dream Academy mentoring), online (mentoring), or through correspondence (birthday wishes).

Direct contact with victims of crimes typically occurs in person (group courses like Building Bridges) or over the phone (following up on group meetings from the Building Bridges course).

Direct contact with families typically occurs in person (mentoring, meetings of Self-Help Groups, distribution of food aid), over the phone (mentoring), or through correspondence (mentoring).

4. Responsibility for protection of vulnerable persons

All employees and volunteers of the MVS must adhere to the instructions set out in this Policy and other related principles and procedures and are obliged to report any problems in the area of protection of vulnerable persons. We expect our employees and volunteers to be excellent role models and to contribute to the development of safe working practices. The following roles of employees and the MVS Board have been defined, which have specific responsibilities for the protection of vulnerable persons within the MVS and in collaboration with external partners.

The current list of individuals responsible for the protection of vulnerable persons in the MVS (see 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3) can be found in Appendix 4 of this document. This appendix will be updated in case of personnel changes.

4.1 The three-member Board and the executive director of MVS

The three-member Board (hereinafter referred to as the “Board”) and the executive director of MVS (hereinafter referred to as the “Director”) has overall responsibility for ensuring effective safeguarding of vulnerable persons throughout the organization. This responsibility will be transferred to the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons, who will collaborate with the Director and the Board on monitoring and reporting any concerns or incidents. For this purpose, the Board and the Director:

- Approves and monitors this Policy and all other relevant principles, procedures, and standards to ensure that the MVS fulfills its duty of care towards vulnerable persons.
- Ensures the allocation of adequate resources to enable the effective implementation of these principles.
- Ensures that all concerns regarding protection are properly addressed and that the safety of vulnerable persons is ensured.
- Ensures the integrity of the MVS is always maintained and its reputation protected.
- Approves changes to this Policy and all related policies, procedures, and reports.
- Establishes an Appeals Committee (directly or through the Director) to review appeals against existing MVS decisions deemed unsatisfactory or unjust by the victim or perpetrator.

4.2 Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons

The Director appoints and the Board approves the appointment of the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons. This person may either be a current member of the senior leadership team or an individual designated solely for this role. The Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons is responsible for implementing and monitoring this Policy and informs the leadership. The Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons:

- Will ensure the implementation of all aspects of this Policy in all areas of MVS operations.
- Will oversee that employees and volunteers who must ensure the protection of vulnerable persons are properly screened in accordance with this Policy before commencing work at MVS, and ensure that relevant employees and volunteers are re-screened every 3-5 years if necessary for their work.

- Will ensure that all employees and volunteers are adequately informed about the protection of vulnerable persons and undergo training commensurate with their responsibilities.
- Will ensure that any concerns regarding the protection of vulnerable persons that arise between MVS and its partner organizations are satisfactorily addressed.
- Will verify all information during screening, and in cases of any deficiencies in the information provided by a job applicant or volunteer position seeker, will conduct a risk assessment before the new employee or volunteer can assume responsibility for the protection of vulnerable persons.
- Will receive and respond to all reports regarding the protection of vulnerable persons and ensure that they are fully investigated and resolved in accordance with MVS procedures.
- Will ensure that parameters and standards for the protection of vulnerable persons are established for each activity, project, programme, contract, or event involving MVS and third-party organizations or individuals.
- Will ensure that MVS projects have appropriate standards for the protection of vulnerable persons for activities conducted by third-party organizations or individuals. This includes any activity involving clients and their families in any region.

4.3 Administrator of the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons Policy

This person will be responsible for implementing, coordinating, and monitoring activities related to the protection of vulnerable persons within the project, programme, event, or activity of MVS. This role may be fulfilled by any employee appointed by management who has the necessary level of knowledge and experience to effectively carry out this role. The Administrator of Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons Policy (hereinafter referred to as the "Administrator") will be responsible for:

- The implementation of this Policy and other related policies, procedures, and guidelines aimed at ensuring the well-being of vulnerable groups involved in any activity or project of MVS.
- The development and implementation of specific measures for the protection of vulnerable persons within the activity or project with the aim of ensuring the safety of children, youth, and vulnerable adults present during the activity. This includes ensuring that all spaces where MVS activities (with clients) take place are safe and secure and that all relevant MVS employees and volunteers have been properly screened and understand their responsibility for protection.
- Ensuring that each partnering organization involved in organizing or implementing an activity involving MVS adheres to a strict level of protection of vulnerable persons, corresponding to the standard expected by MVS.
- Ensuring that every unsupervised employee or volunteer working within MVS is fully screened and approved before undertaking their assigned task.

4.4 Other employees and volunteers

The protection of vulnerable persons is the responsibility of all of us. All employees and volunteers of MVS having contact with vulnerable people through their work have a duty of care. For the purpose of this Policy, an employee is anyone receiving monetary reward for his work, and a volunteer is anyone offering their services in an unpaid capacity.

4.5 Partner organizations

In instances where an employee or volunteer is recruited by another organization to work in partnership with MVS, it is the responsibility of the recruiting organization to ensure that the volunteer is safely recruited and vetted should the role/project involve substantial contact with prisoners and their families. MVS will ensure that any organization it collaborates with has robust safeguarding and safe recruitment policies and procedures in place and that relevant staff and volunteers have been safely recruited to work in their respective roles. Partner organizations must also ensure that relevant staff and volunteers fully understand their duty of care towards prisoners and their families and are familiar with the safeguarding policy of the organization they work for.

5. Implementation

The scope of this safeguarding policy is broad, and, in practice, it will be implemented via a range of policies and procedures within the organization to embed a culture of good safeguarding practice. These policies and procedures include the following:

- **The recruitment of ex-offenders policy** - will ensure that MVS treats DBS applicants who have a criminal record fairly and does not discriminate automatically because of a conviction or other information revealed on their disclosure certificate.
- **Whistle-blowing policy** - this enables staff to inform on other staff/volunteer practices within the organization where there are suspected safeguarding concerns.
- **Grievance and disciplinary procedures** – to address breaches of policies, procedures, and protocols, including a failure to protect the welfare/safety of a child, young person, or vulnerable person involved in the work of MVS.
- **Health and safety policy** – to protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, staff and volunteers, and other parties involved in any activity carried out on premises owned or hired by MVS or its partners.
- **Equal opportunities** – ensures that safeguarding procedures are in line with this policy, in particular around discriminatory abuse and ensuring that the safeguarding policy and procedures are not discriminatory.
- **Data protection policy** - ensures that confidential data is stored and accessed securely and disposed of appropriately.

6. Hiring process, training, and support for staff

MVS is committed to providing staff and volunteers with an appropriate level of safeguarding training as part of their hiring process and on an ongoing basis as required.

During hiring process, new employees and volunteers will be expected to:

- familiarize themselves with this policy document;
- understand the processes for reporting potential breaches of this Policy;
- accept responsibility related to their role and project;
- and if relevant to the project, undergo introductory training on the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

7. Maintaining professional boundaries

MVS employees and volunteers will maintain professional boundaries at all times when working with vulnerable people. Professional boundaries define the limits between an employee / volunteer and a client and include a set of standards necessary for a close working relationship to exist while ensuring that an appropriate level of detachment is kept in place between both parties. Employees and volunteers will be trained in maintaining professional boundaries. In case of any doubts, they can consult the coordinator of the project or the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons (in this order).

8. Risk assessment

MVS will not expose vulnerable individuals or MVS employees and volunteers to situations where they would be subjected to an unacceptable level of risk. Therefore, it is expected that all projects and activities will be assessed for safety before implementation. It is good practice to regularly monitor and evaluate the safety of ongoing projects and activities.

Before commencing a new MVS project, the project coordinator, along with the organization's leadership, the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons, and the Administrator of Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons, will evaluate all potential risks. The risk assessment process should identify foreseeable protective, health, and safety risks and provide a plan to mitigate the risk, enabling the removal or reduction of risk to an acceptable level. The risk assessment should consider the following factors:

- What are the potential protective, health, and safety risks associated with the project or activity?
- Who might they affect?
- What security measures need to be implemented to reduce the risk to an acceptable level, such as environmental protection measures, personal safety measures, training, etc.?
- Under what circumstances will the activity be stopped?
- What steps will be taken in case of an emergency?

The project coordinator will properly inform all employees and volunteers involved in the project about the risks, and if necessary, ensure their appropriate training.

Furthermore, the project coordinator will monitor and evaluate the identified risks, as well as consider new risks during the activity, and take appropriate steps to mitigate or eliminate them as needed. In case of doubts, the project coordinator will consult the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons.

At least once a year, a comprehensive risk assessment will be conducted, involving all project coordinators, the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons, and the Administrator of Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons.

9. Reporting of a potential violation of policies and investigation procedures

Every employee or volunteer of MVS must report and discuss with their supervisor or main coordinator of the specific project any potential breaches regarding the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons Policy, orally or via email.

MVS will investigate and address any concerns regarding the protection of vulnerable persons or allegations made against employees or volunteers, or cases where MVS has been alerted to an issue concerning the well-being of children, youth, or vulnerable adults. MVS will follow the steps below and ensure proper reporting, investigation, and resolution of all concerns, allegations, or incidents related to the protection of vulnerable persons.

9.1 Reporting

Every employee or volunteer of MVS has the obligation to report any potential breaches of the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons Policy immediately or without undue delay. Any potential breaches of the Policy are always reported to the main coordinator of the respective project.

A client of MVS may also report any potential breaches of the Policy. In case the client does not know who the main project coordinator is, they may report any potential breaches of the Policy to any employee or volunteer of MVS. The respective employee or volunteer of MVS will immediately and without undue delay report this information to the main coordinator of the respective project.

The main coordinator of the project, who has been alerted to a potential breach of the Policy, informs the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons, either in person, by phone, or via email. The main project coordinator fills out the "Report of Potential Breach of Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons Policy" form ([Appendix 2](#) of this document) and sends it by email to the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons in MVS. The method of reporting potential breaches of the Policy is also visually presented in [Appendix 1](#) of this document.

9.2 Investigation procedures

The process for addressing potential breaches of the Policy is also visually presented in [Appendix 3](#) of this document.

9.2.1 Potential violation concerning MVS employee or volunteer

If an accusation is made against an MVS employee or volunteer, whether by another MVS employee or volunteer or by an MVS client, the Director of that employee or volunteer will immediately suspend them from their position until the investigation of the incident is concluded.

The Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons, in collaboration with the coordinator of the specific project, will investigate the potential breach of the Policy.

Depending on the nature of the reported incident or concern, the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons may initially report the incident to the relevant police department, especially if it involves physical or sexual abuse; this will ensure that the victim is protected from further harm.

The Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons will conduct the investigation following all expert or legal advice or established practices recommended by the relevant authorities.

If the investigation of the reported incident is straightforward, the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons may close the case. The final decision must be communicated to the Board and the Director by the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons.

If the investigation of the reported incident is not straightforward, the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons will consult with the Board and the Director on the next steps.

If the employee or volunteer of MVS is found innocent in the incident, the investigation will be closed with a negative outcome. The decision on whether to continue the employment or volunteer relationship is at the discretion of the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons, in consultation with the Board and the Director, and possibly with the coordinator of the specific project.

If the employee or volunteer of MVS is found guilty in the incident, the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons, together with the Board and the Director, will assess the severity of the breach. Based on the severity of the breach, they will decide on one of three possible outcomes:

1. minor breach - the employee or volunteer will receive a warning
2. moderate breach - disciplinary proceedings will be initiated against the employee or volunteer
3. serious breach - cooperation with the employee or volunteer of MVS will be terminated immediately

9.2.2 Potential violation concerning persons outside MVS

If an accusation has been made by an MVS client against someone who is neither an employee nor a volunteer of MVS, and the accusation does not relate to MVS's activities or projects, the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons will investigate the report and inform the relevant external authorities about the incident. In most cases, this will be the relevant prison, local authority, child protection agency, or local police department. The case will be closed by MVS in this manner. The Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons will document the outcome of the investigation and report it to the Board and the Director.

9.3 Appeals

If the victim or alleged perpetrator is not satisfied with the handling or outcome of the complaint, they may appeal to the Director or request a review. They should do so within five working days of receiving the original decision. The Director will establish an Appeals Committee within thirty working days of receiving the appeal. The Appeals Committee consists of five members and is composed of MVS employees. The decision of the Appeals Committee will be documented and communicated to the relevant parties within 5 working days of the decision. If the complaint concerns the Director, the appeal may be submitted directly to the Board, which proceeds similarly.

10. Information sharing

All employees and volunteers have a professional duty to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children, young people, and vulnerable adults. MVS recognizes that there may be occasions when the need to safeguard effectively may override confidentiality and necessitate the sharing of confidential information. In such circumstances, information may be shared on a need-to-

know basis only and with the approval of MVS's Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons and the Board.

11. Monitoring

The aim of monitoring is to learn from experiences and, if necessary, further refine and update measures for the protection of vulnerable persons.

The Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons and the Administrator of the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons Policy monitor progress, adherence to the Policy, and any lessons learned from practice in the field of vulnerable persons, and inform the Board about this once a year. To this end, the following key activities will be monitored:

- Safer recruitment and vetting checks undertaken
- Records made and kept of supervision sessions
- Safeguarding training undertaken by employees and volunteers
- Safeguarding reports and complaints and action taken
- Currentness of all relevant policies and procedures
- Current relevance of safeguarding incident reporting structure
- The presence and action of the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons

12. Reviewing Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Director and the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons and reported to the Board.

Last reviewed in Prague on 28.03.2025.

Appendix 1: The procedure for reporting possible violations of the Policy

REPORTING POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS OF SAFEGUARDING OF VULNERABLE PERSONS POLICY

What should be reported?

- any suspicion of possible violation of the Policy

When?

- immediately, without undue delay

Who reports the incidents?

- MVS employee MVS
- MVS volunteer
- a client of MVS

To whom is the suspicion reported?

- to the coordinator of the respective MVS project
- the coordinator fills out the 'Form for reporting of possible violations of Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons Policy' (see [Appendix 2](#) of this document) and sends it to the Person Responsible for the Protection of Vulnerable Persons

How is the suspicion reported?

- verbally / by phone
- or by email

Appendix 2: Form for Reporting Potential Violation of the Policy

1. Information about you

Name and surname:

Job position:

Phone no.:

E-mail:

2. Information about a child/minor/vulnerable adult

Name and surname:

Age:

Address:

Legal guardian:

Contact info:

3. Information about the incident

a) Date, time and place of the incident:

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b) What happened? Describe your worry/suspicion or order of events and all circumstances of the incident (who, where, when, how)

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.....

.....

c) How did you find out about the incident? Who informed you?

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d) Please state other relevant facts that you are aware of (that you either noticed, or someone reported to you):

.....
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.....
.....
.....

e) Provide the exact wording of what was communicated to you about the incident. Please strive for precise formulation, not your interpretation of the communication:

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.....
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.....
.....

f) What was your reaction? What steps did you take?

.....
.....

g) Name and surname of the perpetrator:

.....

h) Were there any other individuals present during the mentioned event? Who?

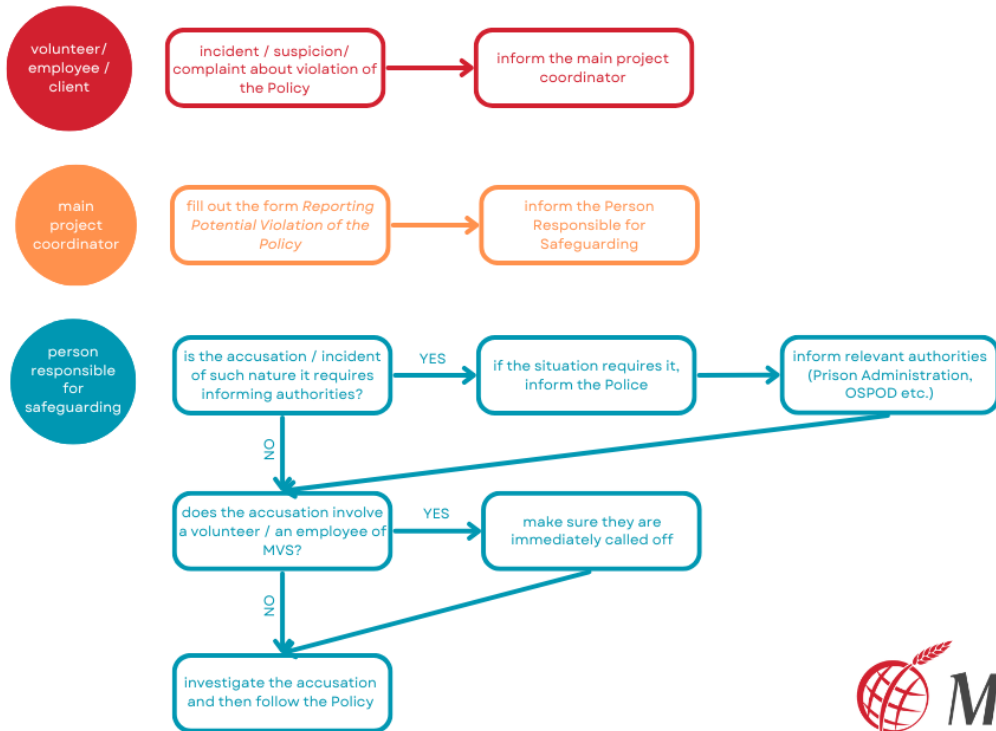
.....

Date and place:

Signature:

Appendix 3: The procedure for reporting potential violations of the Policy

Procedure for Reporting Possible Violation of the Safeguarding Policy



Appendix 4: List of people responsible for protection of vulnerable persons

(updated on 28th March 2025)

The Board of MVS

PhDr. Miroslav Scheinost (Chairman of the Board)

Ing. Ivan Chrástek (Deputy Chairman of the Board)

Gabriela Kabátová (Member of the Board)

Executive Director of MVS

Gabriela Kabátová

Designated Person Responsible for Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons

Mgr. Žaneta Dvořáčková

Administrator of the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons Policy

Mgr. Blažena Kotrsová