



Wellbeing@VIS 

# CHILD WELLBING & SAFEGUARDING HANDBOOK

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## The VIS Core

VIS is a diverse community of learners who are inspired to thrive in rapidly changing environments. Our learners are guided by a strong core: a clear mission, a progressive vision, meaningful values, and a research-based set of learning principles.

### Our Mission

We challenge, inspire, and empower our learners to develop their unique potential in our changing world.

### Our Vision

We will lead the way toward a sustainable future

### Our Values

We value balance, respect, resilience, innovation and courage

## The VIS Learning Principles

We learn when we build and apply new understandings and skills in a variety of contexts. The following research-based learning principles guide our teaching practice:

- **Learners At The Center:** Recognizing learners as core participants and encouraging active engagement.
- **Learners Are Unique:** Engaging all learners and adapting to individual needs.
- **Learners Have Emotions:** Understanding the role of emotion and being aware of individual motivations.
- **Learners Have Potential:** Embracing challenging expectations while understanding individual variations.

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- **Learners Are Collaborative:** Recognizing the value of social interaction to engage with multiple perspectives.
  - **Learners Make Connections:** Linking understandings and transferring learning to new situations.
  - **Learners Are Reflective:** Having a clear purpose, understanding next steps, and using feedback to support growth

Our definition of learning is further underpinned by how we approach intercultural learning at VIS: by developing students' empathy and respect for different cultures, opinions and perspectives; building an understanding of themselves and others to be engaged citizens both locally and globally.

“

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## 1.0 Wellbeing @VIS

Vientiane International School (VIS) has developed a Wellbeing Framework for “building and maintaining a healthy, safe, secure and caring environment”.

This framework comprises five pillars of focus:

- Wellness
- Child Safeguarding
- Privacy and Data Protection
- Health and Safety
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ)

This handbook sets out VIS policies and procedures relating to child safeguarding, although aspects may be repeated or reflected in other areas as all five pillars are intertwined and interdependent.

### 1.1 Board Policy

The Board Policy Manual states that:

The Head of School shall:

- ensure that the school has clear child safeguarding procedures which are well communicated to students, parents and staff

VIS’s employment policies forbid the use of non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements which prevent the transparent sharing of information about child safeguarding concerns, complaints, inquiries or investigations.

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## 2.0 Safeguarding @VIS

Vientiane International School is committed to providing a safe environment for its students, free from abuse, and uses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted in 1989) as a framework. The Convention comprises 54 articles that address the needs, protection and rights of children worldwide. It has been signed by nearly 200 countries including Lao PDR. Countries that ratify the treaty pledge to protect children from economic and sexual exploitation, violence, and other forms of abuse and to advance the rights of children to education, healthcare, and a decent standard of living. A summary of the key articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in so far as they underpin VIS's child safeguarding policies and procedures are given in [Annex 1](#).

VIS relies on preventative practices such as student and staff education to reduce risk and promote student wellbeing. Educators have the opportunity to observe and interact with children over time on a daily basis and are in a unique position to identify children who need help and support. As such, they have a professional and ethical obligation to Duty of Care and therefore must identify children who are in need of protection, and to take steps to ensure that the child and family avail themselves of any services needed to remedy any situation that constitutes child abuse or neglect.

All faculty and staff at Vientiane International School are mandated to report their concerns about the wellbeing of any student. Reporting and follow up of all suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect will proceed in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 8 of this handbook.

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Therefore, no VIS employee may engage in any activity constituting abuse and VIS employees must report any suspected abuse, or welfare and wellbeing concern either in or out of school, to the Child Wellbeing and Safeguarding Team using one of the communication channels established for this purpose.

Child abuse is the physical, sexual, emotional maltreatment or neglect of a child or children. Abuse can take many forms and may not always be visible or detectable. VIS seeks to be a safe haven for students. In order to achieve this the following practices have been put in place:

- VIS's hiring practices include Background Checks for all employees and full-time service providers on appointment and every three years thereafter.
- All VIS staff undergo annual training on the safety and wellbeing of children.
- VIS maintains an updated Child Safeguarding Handbook to ensure appropriate procedures are in place. This document is shared annually with faculty, staff, parents, and students.





## 3.0 Definitions & Possible Indicators Of Abuse And Neglect

Definitions of abuse are complex and usually based in child-rearing behaviors, gender and role responsibilities, and social expectations of different cultures throughout the world. The primary determination of abuse is that it occurs within a relationship that is used to meet the needs / desires of the more powerful person, a member of the family, a teacher, a friend, etc. without concern for the needs of the child.

It is important to note that behavioral indicators in and of themselves do not constitute abuse or neglect. However, together with other indicators, such as family dynamics, they may warrant a referral. A list of possible indicators of abuse and neglect are given in [Annex 2](#).

### 3.1 Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, punching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, biting, burning / scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing intentional physical harm to a child. This can also include Fabricated and Induced Illness (FII) or Factitious Disorder Imposed on Another (FDIA).

### 3.2 Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the most common form of child abuse. It refers to the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child so as to cause severe and adverse effects on a child's emotional development. It may involve: conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved; that they are inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person; having age or

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developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children; causing children frequently to feel frightened; or the exploitation or corruption of children. Emotional neglect, or not attending to the emotional needs of children is also a form of emotional abuse. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may also occur by itself.

Some parents who are emotionally abusive practice forms of child-rearing that are orientated towards fulfilling their own needs and goals, rather than those of their children. Their parenting style may be characterized by overt aggression towards their children, including shouting and intimidation, or they may manipulate their children using more subtle means, such as emotional blackmail. Examples include not allowing them to go to school or the withholding of meals as punishment for perceived misdemeanors.

Emotional abuse does not only occur in the home. Children can be emotionally abused by teachers and other adults in a position of power over the child. Children can also be emotionally abused by other children in the form of “bullying” and “cyber-bullying”.

### 3.3 Neglect

It is generally understood that “neglect” refers to a range of circumstances in which a parent or caregiver persistently fails to adequately provide for a child’s basic needs:

- through the provision of food, shelter and clothing
- by ensuring their access to medical care when necessary
- by providing them with care, love and support

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- by showing appropriate moral and legal guidance
  - by ensuring that the child regularly attends school
  - by exercising adequate supervision and control of the child

Note: VIS requires all students to live with a parent / guardian. Should both parents / guardians leave the city / country for any reason, then they must inform the school as to who will be caring for the student(s), and all appropriate contact details of the person acting in “loco parentis” in case of an emergency. Parents / guardians should complete the [‘Authorization for Temporary Guardianship of a Minor Form’](#) to provide this information.

### 3.4 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. Activities involving physical contact that include penetrative (i.e. rape) or non-penetrative acts during which a child is intentionally touched either directly or through clothing, on the genitals, anus, or breasts for purposes other than hygiene or personal care. Non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production or viewing of pornographic material or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways is also sexual abuse. Children Involved in commercial sex work are victims of sexual abuse, whether they perceive themselves as victims or not.

In addition to knowing the signs of victimization ([Annex 2](#)), below are some signs to look out for as possible signs of grooming by a potential perpetrator. Note that sexual abuse can be perpetrated by men, women and children.

- Has a “favorite” student/child

- Attempts to find ways to be alone with children
- Uses inappropriate language, jokes and discussions about or with students
- Sexualized talk in the presence of children
- Gives private gifts or has private chats on the internet



### 3.5 Depression, Anxiety And Deliberate Self Harm (Dsh)

Many factors are contributing to a rise in anxiety, depression, and deliberate self-harm amongst youngsters. While these may be as a result of some other form of abuse, frequently they are responses to the world in which children are growing up.

Depression can affect people of any age, including children. Although children naturally have mood swings as they grow and develop, depression is different. The disorder can affect how children interact with friends and family. It may prevent them from enjoying school, sports, hobbies or other normal childhood activities.

In children, depression and anxiety often go hand in hand. Anxiety is a medical condition that causes feelings of fear, panic or worry about everyday

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situations. Sometimes, depression or anxiety in children gets chalked up to “growing pains”; however, any episodes that last more than two weeks should be referred to a healthcare professional.

Depression and anxiety are among the most common mental health disorders in children. About 7% of children ages 3 to 17 have anxiety; about 3% deal with depression. [Cleveland Clinic/Depression in Children 2021]

Deliberate self-harm (DSH) is a behavior in which a person commits an act with the purpose of physically harming themselves with or without a real intent of suicide. Teenagers use a number of DSH methods, most commonly cutting, poisoning, and overdosing. Younger children generally scratch or bite themselves.

Research has identified various conducive factors (eg, peers, school, family, religious milieu) that affect suicidal ideation and self-derogation in adolescents. Recent research links the aggravated effects of bullying (including cyberbullying) to DSH and suicidal ideation.

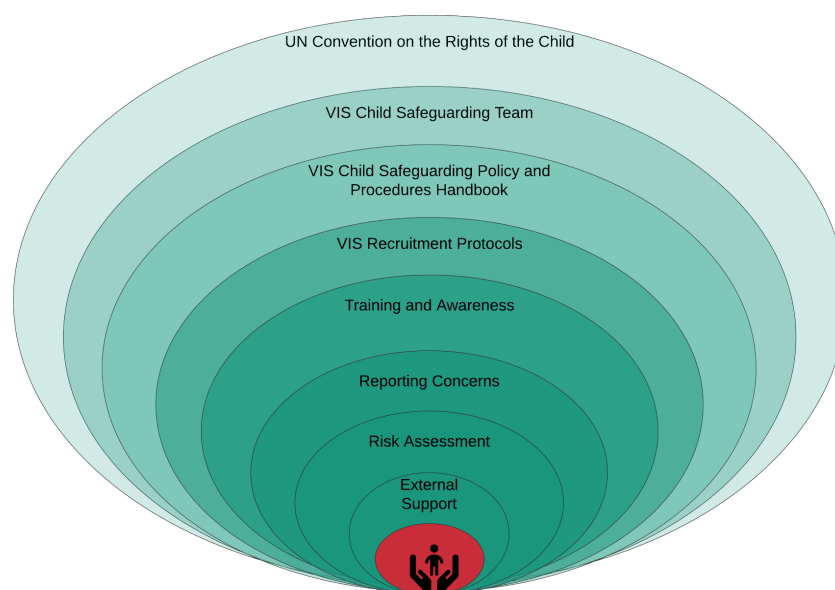
Research reveals that non-suicidal DSH in adolescents reflects underlying hopelessness and low self-esteem as well as other factors that precipitate attempts to deal with unacceptable inner feelings and/or affect the behaviors of others, such as peers or family members.

Possible indicators are given in [Annex 2](#).

## 4.0 Comprehensive Program

At the Vientiane International School, the Child Wellbeing and Safeguarding Team (CWST) ensures that VIS has an up-to-date and comprehensive, proactive approach to student safeguarding that includes:

- Defined roles and responsibilities for child safeguarding
- A comprehensive screening program for staff and visitors
- Clear and comprehensive policies and procedures relating to all aspects of child safeguarding including reporting, recording and responding to reports of concern
- Contractual agreements and commitments
- Comprehensive training for the various stakeholders
- Establishment of Community Partnerships to provide additional resources and support.
- An annual process of measurement, self-monitoring and audit



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## 5.0 Organizational Responsibilities

VIS has established a Child Wellbeing and Safeguarding Team (CWST) which comprises:

- Strategic Safeguarding Lead (SSL): Head of School
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Director of Learning Development
- Deputy Wellbeing & Safeguarding Lead (DWSL): Deputy Head of School – Operations & Finance
- Child Safeguarding Officers (CSO's): Principals, Vice Principals, Counselors, Director of Holistic Learning and the School Nurse
- Board Member with special responsibility for child safeguarding

### 5.1 Role Of The Board

The Board of Trustees provides strategic oversight of safeguarding but does not involve itself in the day-to-day management of child safeguarding in the school. It:

- appoints a member of the Board as the Safeguarding Trustee;
- receives child protection induction and training;
- has safeguarding as a standing item on the Board agenda (as part of the HOS's report);
- reviews and approves key safeguarding policies;
- receives a safeguarding report at least annually from the school's safeguarding lead;
- reviews anonymous data so that it can spot patterns and trends;
- issues an annual safeguarding statement; and
- receives and reviews any allegations of abuse against the Head of School.

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## 5.2 Role Of Child Wellbeing And Safeguarding Team (Cwst)

The role of the CWST is to ensure that there is a comprehensive child safeguarding program in place and to monitor the effectiveness of the program annually. The CWST generally meets monthly to review and update policies and procedures, to monitor reporting data and assess training needs etc. Minutes of CWST meetings are recorded and shared with the team.

Specific tasks include:

- Ensuring a comprehensive child safeguarding program is in place
- Working within the school's existing structures to ensure development and adoption of a child safeguarding curriculum to meet school needs
- Ensuring that child safeguarding curriculum is taught and reviewed annually
- Supporting teachers and counselors in implementing the child safeguarding curriculum
- Developing and scheduling training for all staff that have direct / indirect contact with students regarding the child safeguarding program
- Ensuring and guiding parent education programs to support understanding of the objectives and goals of the policies, protocols and curriculum
- Reviewing and updating policies, protocols, training needs and curriculum annually

Relevant members of the CWST will convene to discuss particular cases of concern in a confidential "Green Room" session – see Incident Response Protocols.



### 5.3 Role Of The Strategic Safeguarding Lead

It is the responsibility of Strategic Lead to create a climate and culture where students can thrive. They have a duty to:

- Work closely with the Board of Trustees to ensure systems and structures are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of students;
- Read, understand and comply with national/local statutory regulations and guidance related to the safety and wellbeing of students; and
- Establish relationships and reach out to international and agencies and authorities to gain support when managing concerns and disclosures of abuse.
- Ensure that VIS's "safer recruitment procedures" are regularly reviewed and followed, including receiving the results of all background checks.
- Receive directly any reports of concern that involve members of staff as possible perpetrators.
- Ensure the Child Wellbeing and Safeguarding Handbook is reviewed and updated yearly
- Lead all Green Room case reviews and determine whether an internal inquiry or external investigation is required.
- Manage referrals to outside agencies

### 5.4 Role Of The Designated Safeguarding Lead

The role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead is to:

- Promote best practice in child safeguarding
- Undergo regular training to ensure their safeguarding knowledge is up to date and in line with new guidance.

- Ensure that the school's safeguarding policies and procedures are up to date and that everyone who has safeguarding duties are familiar with any updates.
- Ensure that all staff are fully trained in safeguarding annually.
- Be available to all staff to discuss any safeguarding issue or concerns.
- Review all reported concerns, determine any follow-up action and ensure relevant members of the CWST are aware of the concerns
- Discuss with the SSL whether when a "green room" meeting is warranted and ensure that all records, including notes of follow up action, are properly maintained.
- Maintain a register of "Students of Concern" – students who have specific safeguarding needs or vulnerabilities.
- Prepare regular reports for the CWST in terms of number of ROCs, trends and other information that may indicate specific areas of focus.



## 5.5 Role Of The Deputy Wellbeing & Safeguarding Lead

The role of the DWSL is to deputize for either the Strategic Lead or Designated Safeguarding Lead in the event of an absence. The Deputy may also be tasked with undertaking internal inquiries or working with external investigators if required.

## 5.6 Role Of Child Safeguarding Officers

Individual CSOs are responsible for:

- receiving verbal or written reports of concern relating to students in their division
- recording all reports received in accordance with reporting procedures
- initiating follow up action where appropriate or as directed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

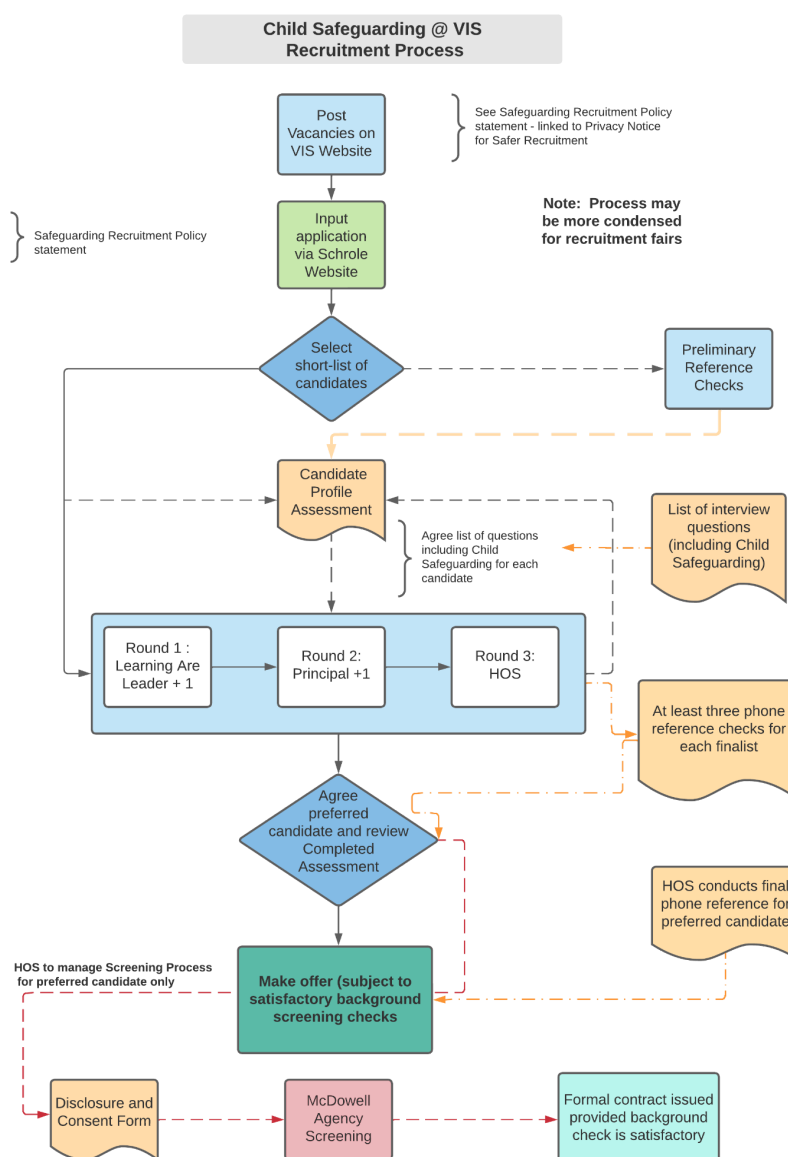
In most instances, follow-up action by CSOs on an ROC will be:

- Principals will meet with parents to follow up on any reports and deal with any “disciplinary” issues with students who are deemed “perpetrators”.
- Counselors will generally work with the students who are considered to be the “victims” or where there is concern for the student’s wellbeing and mental health.

Where appropriate, Counselors will join parent meetings to advocate for the student as necessary.

## 6.0 Safer Recruitment Procedures

VIS has developed a comprehensive “Safer Recruitment Process” to ensure that child safeguarding is an integral part of all stages of the recruitment of new employees. The aim is to deter potential perpetrators from applying to VIS by making it clear that Child Safeguarding is central to the School’s ethos. The process is illustrated below.



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## 6.1 VIS's Safeguarding Recruitment Policy

The following policy statement is posted on the School's website Employment page and on the Schrole recruitment platform used to process applications from interested candidates. All recruitment agencies with which vacancies are listed are similarly advised of the school policy.

VIS is committed to the wellbeing of its learners by ensuring a healthy, safe and secure environment and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. All new appointments, therefore, will be subject to rigorous screening to ensure that they are suitable candidates to work with children and young people. This includes appropriate checks by external agencies to validate identity, employment history, qualifications and self-declared criminal / civil offenses etc., as well as face-to-face interviews with at least two professional references from previous employers.

In order for us to assess the suitability of a prospective candidate, we are required to collect, share and store personal data about each candidate in accordance with our Privacy Policy for Safer Recruitment.

## 6.2 Disclosure And Consent Form

All successful applicants are required to complete a comprehensive "Disclosure and Consent Form" which is used to assist with the background screening of candidates – see below before a formal contract of employment is issued. Modified versions exist for local staff and visitors who are likely to be working with students without the full-time supervision of a VIS member of staff.

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**Disclosure and Consent** requires that prospective employees:

- make a self-disclosure of anything that might preclude them from being a suitable person to work with children;
- provide sufficient, accurate information by which such a declaration might be verified; and
- give consent to VIS to use that information to make such inquiries as are deemed appropriate to verify and validate that the candidates meet VIS's safer recruitment standards.

The verification and validation of data required to assess the suitability of candidates being considered for employment with VIS includes:

- Verification of Identity
- Verification of Qualifications
- Verification of Employment History (10 years)
- Criminal Background checks (in all countries where applicants have been resident for more than 6 months over the last 10 years), including any Sex-Offender Registers or applications through civil legal processes that seek to prevent a person working with children and young people.

## 6.3 Background Screening

### 6.3.1 EXPATRIATE STAFF

VIS has appointed the McDowell Agency to conduct background screening on all successful expatriate applicants prior to contracts of employment being issued. A copy of the Disclosure and Consent Form for such screening is referenced in [Annex 3](#).

The McDowell Agency, Inc. offers a wide variety of International screening services. Currently, criminal search options are available in over 200 countries

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and territories worldwide. Search options include either repository searches or direct searches of law enforcement agencies, government offices, and courts. They also undertake verification of identity, employment and qualifications to ensure that the employee's credentials are valid.

Additionally, follow-up checks within the employee's home country of record are required every three years thereafter for as long as the employee is employed by VIS.

New employees are also required to provide Police Clearance Certificates from their last place of employment (issued within 6 months of leaving).

Part-time or temporary employees will be subject to appropriate background checks depending on their expected length of service and role. Similarly, visitors who are expected to be on campus for a day or more and interacting with students without a VIS employee being present (e.g. consultants) will also be required to complete a modified Disclosure and Consent Form.

### **6.3.2 Lao Staff**

Laos staff are required to complete a modified Disclosure and Consent Form, provide an up-to-date Criminal Check Form 3 from the local courts together with three references. The HR Office will follow up with the employee's village Naiban to verify and validate the data given.

## **6.4 Interviewing And Reference Checks**

VIS undertakes to conduct at least three in-person reference checks (phone or zoom) with previous employers (normally the Heads of School) to ensure that

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there is an opportunity for opinions to be expressed which might not otherwise be put in writing.

Any issues of concern are followed up during the interview process. A list of questions has been developed to probe a candidate's attitudes and experiences regarding child safeguarding and these form an integral part of the interview process.

Examples of the questions are given in [Annex 4](#).

## 6.5 Contractual Agreements

The VIS Contract of Employment makes specific reference to the Employee's obligations to disclose any information that might preclude themselves from working with children and to abide by the Schools Employment Code of Conduct, as follows:

*"The Employee will, at all times, comply with any internal rules of the Employer, including Code of Conduct, policies, procedures, and Internal Regulations, as notified to the Employee (and amended by the Employer from time to time).*

*Nothing contained in this Agreement shall be construed to impute any liability upon VIS for any loss of life, accidental injury, damage to the person or property of the Employee or their dependents or for any other risks incurred or damages suffered as a result of entering into this agreement, to the extent permitted under Lao PDR law. The Employee shall complete the required documentation to affirm to VIS that no outstanding criminal conviction exists in any country that would make the Employee unsuitable to work with children.*



*In accordance with VIS's Safer Recruitment protocols set out in the Child Wellbeing and Safeguarding handbook, employees recruited on the basis of background screening checks conducted by the McDowell Agency. The school reserves the right to withdraw this contract should the background check identify a "condition" which, if it had been disclosed at the time of recruitment, would not have resulted in an offer of employment at that time. Thereafter, limited background checks, based on the employee's home of record, will be repeated every three years as a condition of ongoing employment at VIS."*

VIS's Employment Code of Conduct makes it clear that the following acts on the part of an employee are deemed to be "gross professional misconduct" that will result in immediate suspension and probable termination of employment.

**"Student Safety and Wellbeing, including but not limited to:**

- failure to comply with VIS's Employment Code of Conduct or other policies and procedures which are considered essential to the safety and wellbeing of students
- facilitating and/or offering alcoholic beverages or drugs to students on or off campus at any time
- acts of physical, emotional or sexual abuse involving students or other minors in contravention of the VIS Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.
- exposing students to inappropriate written or digital material (including images, language and content) that could or does result in emotional distress.
- failing to report a serious concern about the welfare of a student or the commission of an act against a student by another member of staff."

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Such acts (if proven) must be recorded on the employee's employment records in case of future requests for reference checks, and may be reported to appropriate recruitment agencies involved in the placement of teachers abroad.

### **6.5.1 Child Safeguarding Agreement**

Each year all VIS personnel will endorse their understanding of the School's expectations with regard to child safeguarding by the Child Safeguarding Agreement ([Annex 5](#)). The Child Safeguarding Agreement applies to all employees (faculty and staff) who represent the school and co-curricular providers or any adults working with students. Aspects of this agreement are detailed below.

It is important to acknowledge that the public and private conduct of employees can inspire and motivate those with whom they interact and/or can cause great harm if inappropriate. Employees must, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work.

Employees should be aware of their own and other people's vulnerability, especially when working alone with students, and be particularly aware that they are responsible for maintaining physical and emotional boundaries in such interactions. They must avoid any covert or overt sexual behaviors or language with those for whom they have responsibility. This includes seductive speech or gestures as well as physical contact that exploits or harasses.

They must show prudent discretion before touching another person, especially students, and be aware of how physical touch will be perceived or received, and whether it would be an appropriate expression of greeting, care, concern

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or celebration. On occasion it may be necessary to physically restrain a child in danger of hurting themselves or others, or to assist a child with hygiene matters. Such contact should be verbally signaled in advance (and consent given if possible) and reported in an ROC afterwards.

VIS personnel are prohibited at all times from physically disciplining a child.

Physical contact with students can be misconstrued both by the recipient and by those who observe it and should occur only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and never in private. One-on-one meetings with students are best held in a public area – in a room where the interaction can be observed – or in a room with the door left open. Classroom windows should not be covered.

School sponsored overnight trips will have at least two chaperones which take into account the gender diversity of the student group.

Communication with students is governed by the key safety concept of transparency. Employees should be mindful of the following guidelines:

- Electronic communications with students are to be made, whenever possible, using a school email or other communication platform. Any electronic communication that takes place over a school network may be subject to review and / or monitoring.
- When using other electronic communication modes messages should relate to a student's school life. Only group messages should be sent with at least two adults included in the group.
- Staff should not engage with individual current students on social media platforms.

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VIS employees should be very cautious discussing sensitive topics with students (e.g. of a sexual nature). If such conversations occur, a counselor should be informed immediately. Counselors, too, should seek consultation as required by the VIS Code of Conduct. VIS employees should never agree to or suggest that confidential discussions be kept from school officials or parents when these involve potential abuse.

VIS personnel should not smoke or use nicotine products, possess or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or make inappropriate reference to the personal use of such, in the presence of students while in a professional capacity (this includes MRISA events, SALSA and any other school endorsed trips).

Employees should never buy alcohol, drugs, tobacco, e-cigarette paraphernalia, or inappropriate video / reading material to give to students. Employees should be cautious of accepting gifts that may indicate an inappropriate relationship. If this occurs, they should meet with their Principal or DSL.

Employees are mandated to report any concerns about a child to a Child Safeguarding Officer (see “reporting abuse and next steps”). Reports should be made immediately, or at least within 24 hours of witnessing an incident or registering a concern. The reporter’s name will be kept confidential if at all possible.

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## 6.6 VIS Visitors To School Policy

All visitors (excluding parents) to campus are required to make a prior appointment which should be notified to the guards. Failure to make a prior appointment may result in a visitor being refused entry. All visitors are required to sign in and wear an ID badge at all times.

Parents and their guests are welcome to visit the School. When interested in visiting their child's class, parents are required to make advance arrangements with the teacher as unscheduled visits to classrooms can be distracting to teachers and students.

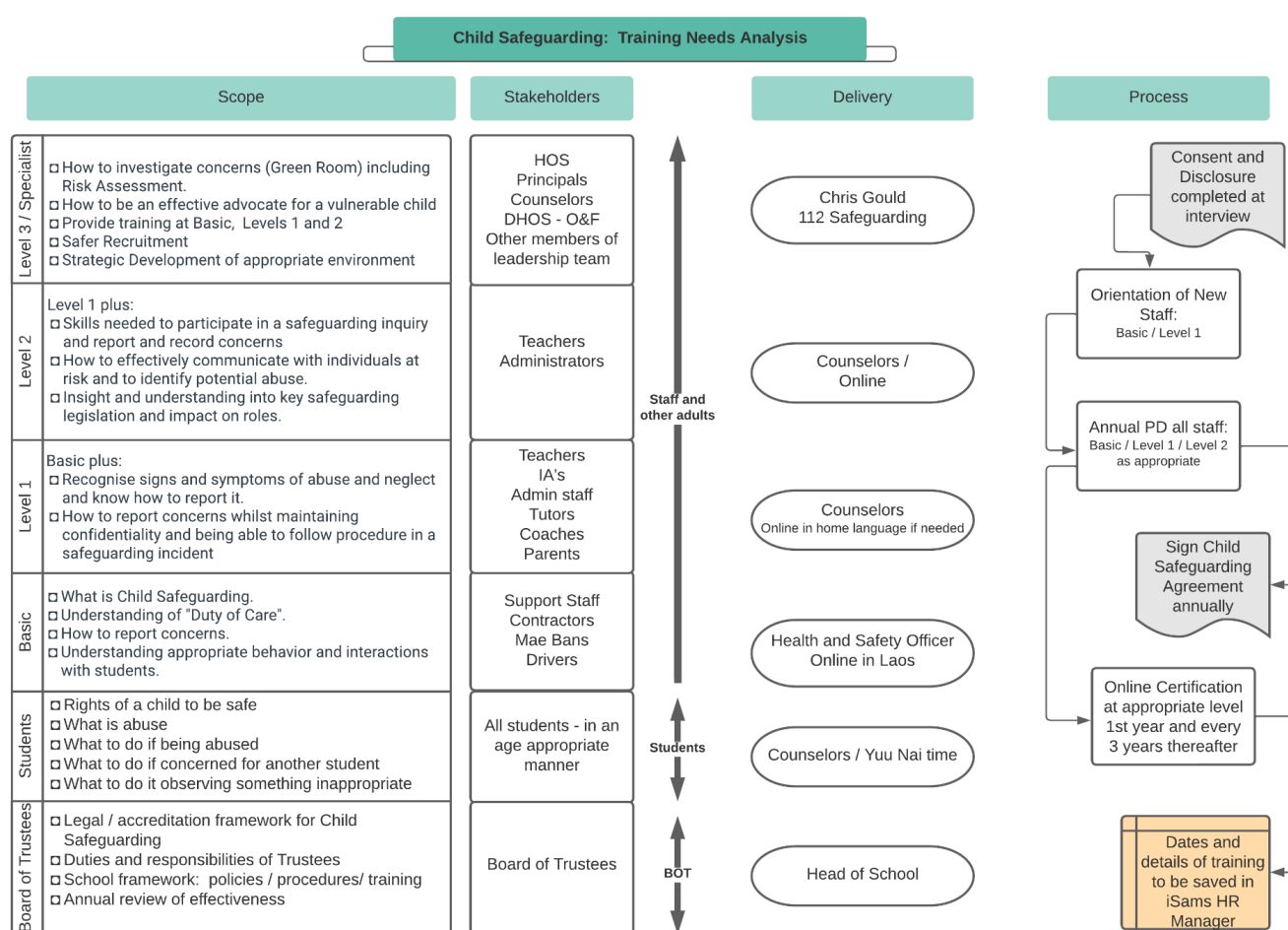
Outside students, educators or interested observers will be granted visiting privileges only with prior permission of the Head of School or their designee and will be supervised by a staff member at all times.

The Head of School will ensure procedures are in place to manage visitors on campus including cases where visitors would be denied entry and/or escorted from the premises.

## 7.0 Training And Education

### 7.1 Training Needs Analysis

The CWST conducts a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) to determine what level of training should be given to the various stakeholders in the VIS community. The current TNA is given below.



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## 7.2 Employee Training

### 7.2.1 Basic

Basic child safeguarding awareness training is required for all Laos support staff. This is delivered online in the Lao language via the program [ChildSafeguarding.com](https://ChildSafeguarding.com). This certificated training is valid for two years.

### 7.2.2 Level 1

Annual training to Level 1 is delivered to all those who have direct student contact including teachers, Instructional Assistants, Tutors, Coaches and Administrators. At present this training is delivered online via a recognized, certified online training courses which provide official certificates upon satisfactory completion. Training is also supplemented by members of the CWST.

### 7.2.3 Level 2

Annual training at Level 2 is delivered to all Teachers and Administrators with the focus on how to recognize possible signs of abuse and how to respond to a student disclosure.

### 7.2.3 Level 3 / Specialist Training

All members of the CWST undergo additional training in strategic child safeguarding management, safer recruitment and how to respond to reports of concern.

### 7.2.5 Training Records

Records of annual training undertaken by each employee are maintained in the iSAMS HR Module and are subject to annual audit.

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## 7.3 Student Curriculum

Research shows that age-appropriate personal safety / abuse prevention programs for children are successful when they are based on the most current research in prevention education. VIS's child safeguarding curriculum will be developmentally sequenced from Early Years to grade 12.

Child safeguarding education aims to assist students to develop skills in:

- Recognizing and responding to unsafe situations
- Seeking assistance effectively
- Establishing and maintaining non-coercive relationships and strengthening attitudes and values related to equality, respect and responsibility.

### 7.3.1 Primary School

- Students will understand they have the right to be safe at VIS.
- Students will gain an understanding of what to do when other students or adults threaten with concerning behaviors.
- Students will identify and describe various abusive behaviors.
- Students will learn the three R's – Recognize, Respond, and Report.
- Students will recognize that teachers, counselors and principals are the adults they should report to if they are concerned about the behavior of others.

### 7.3.2 Secondary School

- Students will understand their right to be safe at VIS.
- Students will gain awareness and understanding of what abusive behavior is and what it looks like.
- Students will understand what to do when something happens to oneself or another person (friends and/or family).



- 
- Students will understand who to report to, the importance of reporting and what to say.
  - Students will learn the three R's – Recognize, Respond, and Report.
  - Students will gain a better understanding of the role of teachers to help support and advocate for the rights of a student to be physically and emotionally safe.

## 7.4 Parent Education

Child safeguarding at school is a partnership with parents. Through Community Inquiry Circles and other school organized parent meetings child safety education and training lessons will be held. These lessons will include the following:

- Understanding school policies and procedures related to abuse.
- Understanding the school's curriculum in this area.
- Signs and symptoms of abuse.
- Awareness of risks to which students are exposed.
- How to talk to children and prevention strategies.
- Handling disclosure and reporting as a parent.
- Community resources.

## 7.5 Promotion And Communication

VIS will publish the Child Safeguarding Handbook in both English and Lao language, in digital and printed format. Links to the digital versions of the handbook will be made available on the Parent and Staff Intranet sites (and on the website).

The School will also develop digital and printed materials that can be posted around campus or shared with students to reinforce VIS's Child Safeguarding Policies and Protocols, including for example:

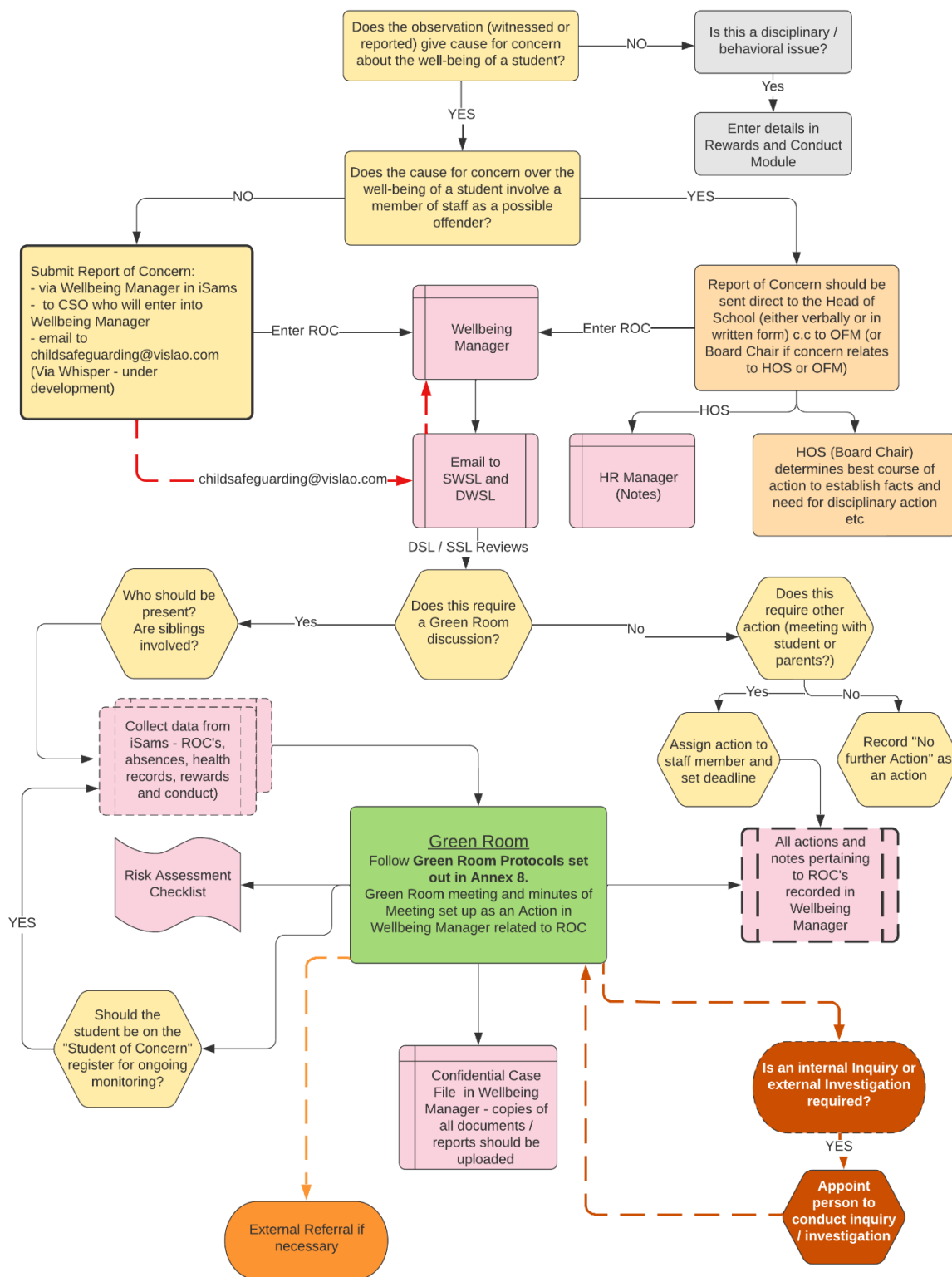
- How to report a concern.
- How to say No to Bullying.
- How to respond to Online / Cyberbullying or grooming.
- The rights of a child to a safe environment.
- 



## 8.0 Process For Reporting And Handling Concerns Of Abuse

The chart below shows the process to be followed following a Report of Concern.

## Child Safeguarding Process following a Report of Concern



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## 8.1 Step 1: Reporting A Concern (Roc)

Everyone is mandated to report a concern about the wellbeing or safety of a student at VIS within 24 hours. A concern may be as a result of a witnessed “incident”, verbal or written disclosure, or general observation. Some witnessed incidents may be of a behavioral / disciplinary nature, such as the use of bad language or inappropriate behavior, in which case the staff member who witnessed the incident should deal with it immediately, record it in Rewards and Conduct, and only log it as a ROC if there is a victim who may have been harmed or a perpetrator who may be displaying signs of an underlying concern of abuse or neglect. If in doubt, the person making the report should check with a CSO.

Staff have been trained in how to use the TED questions (Tell, Explain, Describe) in response to a disclosure by a student. See section 8.4 below. They are not expected to “investigate” or act on the disclosure but to report the nature of the disclosure to the CWST.

If the ROC involves a member of staff as a possible perpetrator, the ROC should be made either verbally or in writing to the HOS (or to the Board Chair if the ROC concerns the HOS).

Reports may be made in a number of ways:

- Faculty and Administrators who have access to the iSams database, should log a “Report of Concern” which is recorded in the Wellbeing Manager Module.

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- Those who do not have access to iSams should complete a Report of Concern Form which can be found on both the Staff Intranet, Student Intranet or Parent Portal sites. Email to [childsafeguarding@vislao.com](mailto:childsafeguarding@vislao.com)
  - Via email to [childsafeguarding@vislao.com](mailto:childsafeguarding@vislao.com)
  - As a verbal report to any Child Safeguarding Officer or member of the administrative or teaching staff, who will in turn enter the ROC into Wellbeing Manager.
  - An anonymous reporting app, called Whisper, is currently under development and will be available to all members of the community as an alternative means of reporting a concern
  - Students can also use the Komodo Wellbeing app to ask to meet with a trusted adult or to let their Saibadee mentor / Classroom teacher know if they have a personal concern.

All ROCs will ultimately be logged in Wellbeing Manager and an email notification sent to the SSL and DSL that a concern has been logged.

All ROCs should be acknowledged by the SSL or DSL so that the person making the report knows that it has been received but they will not be appraised of the outcome of any investigation unless it is deemed necessary for the on-going safety of the child while at VIS.

## 8.2 Step 2: Reviewing A Report Of Concern (Roc)

The DSL will review the report and will:

- Enable visibility for the principal and counselor of the student concerned.
- Assign follow-up actions where it is deemed necessary.

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- Discuss with the SSL whether to convene a meeting of the CWST “Green Room” to develop a response to a serious reported incident. For full Green Room Protocols, see [Annex 7](#).
  - Collect data from Wellbeing Manager (previous ROCs and actions), Attendance Manager (school days missed and reasons), Medical Centre (visits to the Health Centre and reasons), Rewards and Conduct (any academic / disciplinary issues) and Learning Plans. Where appropriate, similar data for any siblings will also be extracted in preparation for the Green Room meeting.

The SSL will chair the Green Room meeting at the end of which it will be agreed which, if any, of the following actions are required:

- Meeting with parents and/or student to follow up.
- Complete a Risk Assessment.
- Recommendation for a referral to an external therapist
- Further “internal inquiries” to clarify an incident (such as interviews of witnesses, review of CCTV footage, emails or internet searches etc.) or appointment of an external investigation in the case of serious allegations.
- Include the student (and siblings) on the “Student of Concern” Register for on-going monitoring.

Case Reference: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

### Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment Framework

Vivien Bretford | April 18, 2021

No assessed risk of harm

Low risk - situation to be monitored

Moderate Risk requiring counselor support

Highly likely to result in harm without professional intervention

Evidence that harm is already occurring and requires immediate intervention

**Is the child assessed to be at risk of self-harm?**

Health

Learning Needs

Emotional and Behavioral Development

Identity

Family and Social Relationships

Social Presentation

Selfcare skills

*Are there concerns about the child with regard to:*

**Is the child assessed to be at risk of being harmed by others?**

Providing Basic Care?

Ensuring Safety?

Displaying Emotional Warmth?

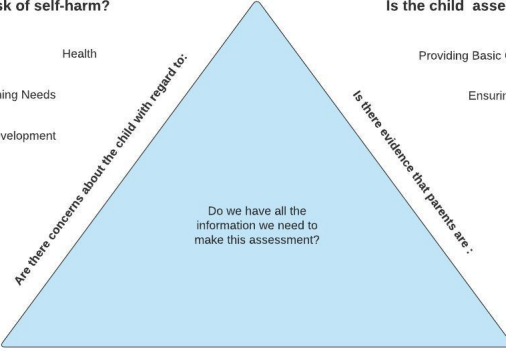
Encouraging Stimulation

Providing Guidance and Boundaries

Providing Stability

*Is there evidence that parents are:*

Do we have all the information we need to make this assessment?



Has the Counselor deemed it necessary to complete a Risk Assessment regarding the likelihood of attempted suicide?

**Are there any other environmental or cultural factors that we need to be aware of?**

Communication Challenges

Cultural Norms

Social Integration

History or any previous concerns

Access to Support

Living Arrangements

Peer Groups

Is there any reason to consider one or both parents to be part of the reason for the concern?

Would direct intervention at this stage increase the level of perceived risk?

Does VIS have the appropriate capacity to support the child and/or family?

### 8.2.1 Risk Assessment

The Green Room Team will undertake a Risk Assessment to ascertain the perceived level of risk to the child(ren) to guide the urgency and scope of possible intervention required.

In cases of suicide ideation, the relevant Counselor will conduct a more in-depth risk assessment as to the child's likelihood to commit suicide.

## 8.3 Step 3: Next Steps Following A Green Room

In situations where the Child Wellbeing and Safeguarding Team agrees that there is reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect or serious concern for the

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child's mental health or wellbeing, a plan of action will be developed to assist the child and family. Actions that may take place are:

- Meetings with the family to present the school's concerns.
- VIS providing support for the child and family.
- Referral of the student and family to external professional counseling.
- Consultation with local authorities according to Lao law \*see [Annex 9](#).
- Notification to the management of the sponsoring employer of the concern with the child/family.
- Consultation with the consulate / embassy of the country of the involved family.
- Consultation with the school lawyer or another attorney.
- Reporting to an international authority, if appropriate via the channels listed on the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children website.

In situations where there is no reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect the Child Wellbeing and Safeguarding Team will still consider whether the provision of support to the child and family would be beneficial.

It is important that follow-up activities are conducted in a manner that ensures that information is documented factually, and that strict confidentiality is maintained.

Once the team has developed and enacted an action plan, they will allocate a case manager (normally the relevant Counselor) to follow up on the following as applicable:

- Maintain contact with the child and family.



- Provide the child's teachers resource materials and strategies for supporting the student.
- Maintain contact with outside therapists to update the progress of the child in school.

## 8.4 Responding To A Report By A Child Or Young Person

Adults working with children and young people must understand and know how to respond appropriately to disclosures from students, knowing that it is often very difficult for them to disclose abuse. Children and young people often cannot easily talk about an abuse problem because they may:

- Try to "forget" in order to cope.
- Worry they will lose the love of their parents and friends.
- Fear the shame of abuse or getting in trouble for telling (especially older children).
- Fear they will be blamed as adults tend to be believed more than children.
- Be under threat by the offender to harm them or their family if they tell.

It is important that the adult remains calm and in control of their feelings in order to reassure and support the child or young person. If a student asks to speak about something that is worrying them, this should be in a neutral setting where it is quiet, and there will be few interruptions

Possible ways to show care and concern:

- Listen carefully to what the child or young person is saying.
- Refrain from expressions of panic or shock.

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- Reassure the child or young person that they are believed and that to disclose was the right thing to do.
  - Acknowledge that it is hard to talk about such things.
  - Indicate that it is necessary to share this information with a CSO (i.e. someone who can provide advice about what should happen next).
  - Reassure the child or young person that they are not to blame (only if the child indicates this is what they believe).

If the child has questions or concerns that can't be immediately addressed, explain that these will be passed on to the relevant person who can assist.

A child will not be helped if:

- They are probed into telling details; it is important that they are able to give the details in their own way.
- There is an expression of anger or disgust about the alleged abuse.
- Promises are made that can't be kept, such as promising total confidentiality or that things will get better.
- There is an attempt to seek further details beyond those that the child or young person freely wants to discuss.
- The abuser is confronted.

Remember that quizzing children about details may be interpreted as disbelief. The adult's role is to support and listen to the child or young person, not to conduct an investigation. Use Tell, Explain, Describe (TED) questions only.

Respect the student's confidence. Share with the Child Safeguarding Officer – do not discuss information with other staff. Any as needed sharing should be done by the Child Safeguarding Officer. Write down the basic information, in

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the student's words if possible. Explain to the student that the concern must be reported to a member of the CWST. Try to let the student know that someone else also will need to talk with them and explain why.

If the student does not want to go home, this should be considered an emergency. Report to the Child Safeguarding Officer immediately.

If abuse is suspected at any time, regardless of whether or not the child or young person has told anyone, speak to a divisional Child Safeguarding Officer.

## 8.5 Allegations Involving A VIS Employee

In the event that the abuse or neglect allegation involves a staff member of VIS, the same steps described above will be followed in conjunction with the following actions.

### 8.5.1 Investigation

- VIS personnel who are involved in or accused of abuse will immediately be removed from any contact with students and the situation will be quickly and thoroughly investigated by the school administration.
- The Head of School will determine who will lead an internal inquiry (normally the Deputy Wellbeing and Safeguarding Lead) or whether an external investigator should be brought in. The investigator will conduct a prompt, confidential and thorough investigation to determine whether reasonable grounds exist to believe that abuse occurred. A written report will be submitted to the Head of School.

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- The lead investigator will forward reports to the Head of School. If the Head of School is implicated, the Board Chair will lead the inquiry / investigation and receive all reports.

### **8.5.2 Consequences**

If the investigation indicates that reasonable grounds do not exist to support allegations of abuse, a statement to that effect will be given by the Head of School to the VIS employee in question.

- VIS employees who violate any of the regulations above will, at a minimum, be officially reprimanded in writing. This will take place in a meeting involving the Head of School and/or divisional principal. The first offense may lead to immediate termination depending on the circumstances.
- If inappropriate behavior did exist but does not constitute abuse, the perpetrator will be subject to the disciplinary procedures set out in the VIS Employment Code of Conduct.
- In serious cases, consideration will be given as to whether the offense meets the threshold where it must be reported to the Lao Authorities following advice from the School's lawyers.

## **8.6 Incident Response**

### **8.6.1 Documenting Suspected Abuse Or Neglect**

The following information will be collected and filed:

- Notes from Child Wellbeing and Safeguarding Team discussions.
- Emails that pertain to the case.
- Description of action taken.
- Correspondence with the student.
- Correspondence with the student's family.

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- Correspondence with external agencies.
  - A timeline of events, actions and conversations.
  - Any pertinent CCTV coverage or other documentary evidence that may be necessary should follow-up legal action be required.

All documentation of the case will be kept securely by the Child Wellbeing and Safeguarding Team with soft copies attached to the ROC record in Wellbeing Manager.

## 8.7 Bullying

### 8.7.1 Student-To-Student Protection

VIS believes that every child has the right to learn in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Social meanness, harassment and bullying are not acceptable behaviors at VIS. VIS undertakes proactive and preventive approaches to ensure a safe environment. The aim is to promote a positive school environment in the classroom, common areas, and at school-sponsored activities.

Mean behavior, harassment and bullying may include, but are not limited to, behavior based on a person's actual or perceived race, religion, nationality, color of skin, gender, sexual preference, physical handicaps or physical appearance. They do not include the naturally occurring, occasional conflict, which is an inevitable part of social interaction and can be dealt by the adult on duty at the time.

Mean behavior is purposeful and hurtful but may happen only once or twice. It can be exhibited through acts such as teasing or name-calling, social

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exclusion, insults, threats, hitting, pushing, kicking and may occur either in person or electronically. Bullying is defined as any of the above acts that are intentionally cruel, usually repeated, and with a social or interpersonal power imbalance, where one person feels they do not have the power to stop it.

Mean behavior, harassment and bullying can take many forms including social, verbal, online, and/or physical incidents and, in addition to the examples above, might include:

- Physical Aggression: Unwelcome physical contact, inflicting bodily harm.
- Social Alienation: Public humiliation, malicious exclusion, malicious rumor mongering, threats of isolation.
- Verbal Aggression: Intimidating phone calls, texts, emails, verbal threats of aggression of property and possessions, verbal threats of bodily harm; and/or Intimidation: extortion, taunting, threats toward family members, coercion.

For the purpose of these guidelines, harassment and bullying consist of repeated exposure over time to negative actions targeted at a specific victim(s). However, should the act be grievous, repeated exposure is unnecessary for the behavior to be considered in violation of the school's behavioral expectations and for disciplinary action to be taken.

### **8.7.2 Guidelines For Situations Involving Social Meanness, Bullying Or Harassment**

Consistent with processes for resolving other complaints or grievances at VIS reports of harassment and bullying will be resolved at the lowest level possible. Therefore, a member of the school community who believes he or she has

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been subjected to harassment or bullying should first consider telling the person(s) that the conduct is offensive and request them to stop.

If it is difficult for a student to speak directly to the person, or if the offensive behavior does not stop after the request to cease, or if the student or parent feel that they need assistance with an ongoing issue of social meanness or bullying, they should bring it to the attention of a teacher, division counselor and / or division Principals. The situation will be assessed as either a counseling issue or a discipline issue (by the divisional principal) and referred accordingly for further action. These actions will be developmentally appropriate and may range from a session with the counselor to disciplinary meetings with the administration. For serious or repeated incidents of misconduct, consequences may include suspension or expulsion from VIS as stated in the Parent Student Handbook for each division.

Where a student is “harmed” by the behavior or the perpetrator is displaying characteristics that may need further assessment, any incident should also be reported as a ROC in case there are other similar incidents that indicate a pattern of behavior that is more concerning.

*Note: A person who knowingly makes a false report of harassment and bullying may also be considered to have violated this policy, and subject to the courses of action and consequences herein.*

### **8.7.3 Education And Prevention**

The prevention of social meanness and bullying requires a thoughtful educational program. The school will include in its educational program, information about social meanness and bullying as appropriate so that

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everyone will understand the intention of this policy, the appropriate ways to interact with others, and what to do if a person feels they are being impacted by social meanness or bullying as defined by the policy.

## 9.0 Online Safeguarding

VIS is very aware that children may have access to inappropriate content on-line or may be the victims of cyber-bullying or grooming through the various social media and gaming platforms that they use. The Digital Leadership Team, working with the Child Wellbeing and Safeguarding Team, seek to take all reasonable precautions to ensure that students at school are not at risk on-line through a variety of measures and safeguards including:

- Use of Firewalls and Network Management tools that restrict access to certain sites that are age or content inappropriate.
- Filters and restrictions within platforms such as Google which also restrict access to certain sites. Teachers and students have to apply for sites to be unblocked if they are deemed necessary for a particular lesson or project.
- Digital Citizenship curriculum at all levels that teaches students how to stay safe online and protect personal data.
- Vetting and approval processes for new apps before they are installed on students' devices.
- Storage of staff emails and logs of internet searches by adults which may be reviewed in the event of a safeguarding allegation made against a member of staff.
- Community Inquiry Circles with parents to share strategies for monitoring what children may access at home.



Any instances of online bullying or hate speech shared by students and reported will be investigated by the Divisional Principal and Head of Ed Tech and dealt with accordingly.

It is impossible to prevent students from accessing all inappropriate content as age-restrictions depend on the developer of the content. Students are also adept at bypassing administrative restrictions placed on school-owned devices, or accessing content on their own personal devices. We therefore encourage everyone to be aware of the potential risks and to report concerns about on-line activities that may be harmful to students.

## **10.0 Resources and Audits**

### **10.1 Community Partnership Resources**

The availability of external organizations within Laos that might be in a position to assist the school and/or families in the event of serious cases of child abuse are limited. To this end, VIS is building up a network of external agencies within Laos and abroad who might be able to assist.

- US Embassy (US Embassy Families)
- French Clinic
- Individual counselors / psychologists
- External consultants who are experts in the field of Child Safeguarding and the handling of child abuse cases.

### **10.2 Measurement, Analysis, Self-Audits**

The CWST is responsible for:

- Compliance and quality / effectiveness.
- Annual self-audit to assess the policy and procedures.

- Analysis of policies and procedures every three years.
- Continuous quality improvement.
- Effectiveness and measurement.

The results of such reviews are reported to the Board annually as part of the HOS's annual review.



## Annex 1: Summary Of Key Articles From The Un Convention Of The Rights Of The Child

There are 54 Articles from the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. Below is a summary of the articles that are relevant to schools.

### **Article 1**

A child means every person below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

### **Article 2**

A child has the right to be protected without discrimination of any kind.

### **Article 3**

In all actions concerning children the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration, ensuring that the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being.

### **Article 5**

The responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or legal guardians are respected to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention.

### **Article 6**

Every child has the inherent right to life.

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### **Article 8**

A child had the right to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference.

### **Article 9**

A child has the right not to be separated from his or her parents against their will, except where such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child.

A child who is separated from one or both parents has the right to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child's best interests.

### **Article 12**

A child who is capable of forming his or her own views has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

### **Article 13**

A child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

### **Article 14**

A child has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide

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direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child shall be recognized.

### **Article 15**

A child has the right to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.

### **Article 16**

A child has the right not to be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honor and reputation.

### **Article 17**

A child has the right to access information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

### **Article 19**

A child has the right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

Protective measures should include effective procedures for the establishment of social programs to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment.

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### **Article 23**

A child who is mentally or physically disabled should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.

### **Article 24**

A child has the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health.

### **Article 28**

A child has the right to education in an environment where school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity.

### **Article 29**

The education of the child shall be directed to:

- The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
- The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
- The development of respect for the natural environment.

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**Article 30**

A child shall have the right to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

**Article 31**

A child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

**Article 32**

A child has the right to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

**Article 33**

A child has the right to be protected from the illicit use, production and trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

**Article 34**

A child has the right to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

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## Annex 2: Possible Indicators Of Abuse

### **Possible Indicators Of Physical Abuse**

Physically abused children find it difficult to relate to their peers and the adults around them. The threat of violence makes them vigilant and mistrustful, and they may be overly domineering and aggressive in their attempts to predict and control other people's behavior, or extremely reserved and withdrawn. Abused children are also vulnerable to instances of overwhelming emotional responses to everyday situations.

Physically abused children exhibit a range of signs, including:

- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Injuries to the body in places that aren't normally exposed to falls, etc.
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Being aggressive towards others
- Being very passive and compliant
- Chronically running away
- Excessive need to use the toilet without a medical reason
- Inappropriate clothing (extra baggy or very revealing)



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- Arms and legs are kept covered in hot weather (not related to religious attire)

### **Possible Indicators Of Emotional Abuse**

Emotionally abused people are often more withdrawn and emotionally disengaged than their peers, and find it difficult to predict other people's behavior, understand why they behave in the manner that they do, and to respond appropriately.

Emotionally abused children exhibit a range of signs, including:

- Low self-esteem
- High anxiety
- Inappropriate emotional response to painful situations »
- Chronically running away
- Compulsive stealing
- Obsessions or phobias
- Delayed speech or sudden speech disorder
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Difficulties with school attendance
- Difficulty making friends
- Attention-seeking behavior
- Incontinence and mysterious pains
- Persistent tiredness
- Lying
- Delayed physical, mental and emotional development
- Inappropriate need for physical contact

### **Possible Indicators Of Neglect**

Neglected children exhibit a range of signs, including:

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- The child is unwashed, hungry and/or improperly clothed
  - Parents are uninterested in the child's academic performance
  - Parents do not respond to repeated communications from the school
  - The child does not want to go home
  - Both parents or legal guardian are absent from Vientiane for any period of 24 Hours or greater
  - Parents cannot be reached in the case of emergency.
  - Possible Indicators of Sexual Abuse
  - Pain or irritation to the genital area
  - Vaginal or penile discharge
  - Excessive toilet usage without medical reason
  - Difficulty with urination
  - Sexually transmitted disease (STD)
  - Fear of people or places
  - Aggression
  - Regressive behaviors, bed wetting or stranger anxiety
  - Excessive masturbation
  - Sexually provocative behavior
  - Stomach pains or discomfort walking or sitting
  - Being unusually quiet and withdrawn or unusually aggressive
  - Suffering from what seem to be physical ailments that can't be explained medically
  - Showing fear or distrust of a particular adult
  - Mentioning receiving special attention from an adult or a new "secret" friendship with an adult or older student
  - Refusal to continue with school or usual social activities
  - Sexual behavior, language, or knowledge too advanced for their age
  - Change in clothing style (extra baggy or very revealing)
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## **Depression, Anxiety And Deliberate Self Harm**

The following may be signs of depression in children and if they persist beyond a couple of weeks, medical advice should be sought:

- Behavioral problems at school.
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits.
- Feelings of sadness or hopelessness.
- Lack of interesting fun activities.
- Low energy levels or general tiredness.
- Mood changes, such as irritability.

Signs of anxiety in children may include:

- Anxiety about the future.
- Fear of being away from a parent.
- Physical symptoms of panic, such as sweating or dizziness.
- Refusal to go to school or take part in social activities.
- Worry that a parent or loved one may die.

Methods of self-harm:

- Cutting
- Poisoning
- Drug overdose
- Battery (hitting)
- Biting
- Shooting
- Burning
- Hanging
- Pinching
- Scratching
- Jumping from bridges, buildings, or other high places

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## Annex 3: Disclosure And Consent Form

VIS is committed to the wellbeing of its learners by ensuring a healthy, safe and secure environment and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. All new appointments, therefore, will be subject to rigorous screening to ensure that they are suitable candidates to work with children and young people. This includes appropriate checks by external agencies to validate identity, employment history, qualifications and self-declared criminal / civil offenses etc., as well as face-to-face interviews with at least two professional references from previous employers.

To assist with the verification and validation of data required to assess the suitability of candidates being considered for employment with VIS, VIS has appointed the McDowell Agency Inc to conduct the following checks in respect of all applicants who are short-listed for interview:

- Verification of Identity
- Verification of Qualifications
- Verification of Employment History (10 years)

Criminal Background checks (in countries where applicants have been resident for more than 6 months over the last 10 years), including any Sex-Offender Registers or applications through civil legal processes that seek to prevent a person working with children and young people.

The Disclosure and Consent Form will be sent to short-listed candidates at the appropriate time.

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## Annex 4: Safer Recruitment Interview Questions

- Describe a time you had to address a safeguarding issue.
- Why is feeling safe such an important component in a child's learning?
- Have you ever felt uncomfortable about a colleague's behavior towards children in a previous job? What were your concerns, what did you do, and how was the issue resolved?
- Safeguarding children is an important part of our work. Can you give me some examples of how you would contribute to making the organization a safer environment for children?
- Tell me about a time when a child or young person behaved in a way that caused you concern. How did you deal with that? Who else did you involve?
- Why do you want to work with children? What do you think you have to offer? Give an example of how children have benefited from contact with you also?
- Has there ever been a time when you have had to challenge the views of a senior member of staff in regard to safeguarding concerns? If yes, what was the outcome?
- How did your previous organization tackle child safeguarding?

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## Annex 5: VIS Child Safeguarding Agreement

### VIS Child Safeguarding Agreement

(To be signed by VIS personnel)

As a VIS staff member, I understand that I am contractually obligated to abide by the guidelines of the Child Safeguarding Agreements as listed below:

#### **I will:**

- Report within 24 hours of observing or reasonably suspecting abuse to a Child Safeguarding Officer (division principal, or division counselor).
- In situations where I need to communicate electronically with students, I will only use school email or other VIS communication platforms. Any electronic communication that takes place over a school network may be subject to review and / or monitoring.
- Exercise care with my use of language in my professional capacities.
- Treat everyone with respect, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.

#### **I will not:**

- Touch or speak to a student in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Be alone with students at school or non-school activities on weekends or evenings.
- Intentionally expose students to embarrassment or disparagement.
- Smoke or use tobacco, e-cigarette or vaping products, or possess, or be under

- the influence of alcohol, or illegal drugs in the presence of students while in a professional capacity or make inappropriate comments about the personal use of the same.
- Accept intimate and elaborate gifts or give private gifts to students without the knowledge of their parents/guardians and division administrator.
- Engage with current, individual students through social media.

I understand that as a person working with students under the auspices of VIS, I am subject to a criminal background check. My signature confirms that I have read this child safeguarding agreement and that I understand that any action inconsistent with this agreement, or failure to take action, mandated by this child safeguarding agreement may result in disciplinary action, as described in the VIS Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.

**Name/Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_



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## Annex 6: Report Of Concern Form

VIS is committed to providing a “Safe and Caring Environment” for our students. As a member of the VIS Community we have a duty of care and are all mandated to report any concern we may have about the mental or physical well-being of a child or inappropriate behavior of an adult towards a child(ren) within 24 hours of an observation or disclosure.

Teachers and Administrators with access to iSAMS, can digitally file their Report of Concern (Child Safeguarding) through the Wellbeing Module. In all other instances, this form should be completed and either physically handed to a Child Safeguarding Officer (Principal or Counselor) or emailed to [childsafeguarding@vislao.com](mailto:childsafeguarding@vislao.com) where it is received by the Senior Child Safeguarding Officers. Any report concerning the behavior of a member of staff towards a child should be reported directly to the Head of School in person or via this email address. Please refer to Data Protection protocols below.

Reports of Concern are treated with utmost confidentiality. The person making a report may be contacted by a member of the Child Safeguarding Team only if there is a need to clarify anything contained in the report. Thereafter, any information pertaining to the action taken as a result of the report will not be shared.

### Data Protection Protocols

- Do not put the name of the child in the Subject Line or text of the email. Subject Line should refer to Nature of Concern and Date of Report.



- Do not discuss this concern with anyone outside of the Child Safeguarding Team
- Do not keep a copy of your Report of Concern (either in hard copy or soft copy once you have submitted it through proper channels and received acknowledgement of receipt).
- Digital Reports in Wellbeing Manager must be categorized as a Child Safeguarding Concern to ensure maximum confidentiality.

<b>Name of Person Making the Report:</b>	
Contact email address or phone number:	
Date and Time of Report submission:	
<b>Details of Incident / Disclosure</b>	
If the concern is to do with the wellbeing of a child, <b>Name of Child:</b> [Indicate SELF if you are reporting a concern about your own safety]	
If the concern involves behavior of a member of staff, <b>Name of Staff Member:</b>	
Date and Time of Incident / Disclosure	
Location:	
Names and roles (witness, perpetrator, victim, etc) of any other people involved in or witness to the incident:	
Nature of the concern:	
<b>Detailed description of facts: What was said, observed or reported – exact language as far as possible.</b>	

<b>Action taken: What did you or anyone else involved say or do at the time of the incident or disclosure?</b>
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<b>Any other information</b>
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## Annex 7: Green Room Protocols

Green Room Members: Divisional counselor, divisional principal, Operations and Finance Manager and Head of School. Green Room Meetings are convened by HOS or OFM based on the nature of the Report of Concern.

### Protocol

Record Keeping: Green Room should be set up as an Action within the ROC by the convener of the meeting and the minutes recorded to “complete” that Action. Any further actions arising as a result of the meeting (such as “Meet with Parents”) should be set up as additional Actions within the same ROC. Any relevant documentation should be uploaded to the ROC (email exchanges, ROC report for the student etc).

WHO?	WHAT?	HOW LONG?
<b>STRATEGIC LEAD</b>	Welcome, Norms and Grounding. Nominate someone to take notes, global notes, if not already documented.	3 minutes
<b>COUNSELOR</b>	Counselor presents the case, sharing factual information as presented in the report of concern. Counselor should include previous known information/documented information about the child. Make sure the report is factual. Any interpretation or inference drawn from what was observed, said or alleged should be clearly stated as such.	5-10 minutes (or longer based on case)
<b>OTHER MEMBERS</b>	Ask clarifying questions to the effect of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Review data from all systems: R&amp;C, Wellbeing and Medical Unit</li> <li>» Number of absences</li> <li>» Does the child receive ongoing support services of any type? (ILP?)</li> <li>» What other facts do we know? Siblings?</li> <li>» What other details exist?</li> <li>» Should this child be going home after school?</li> <li>» Is the child in imminent danger? <a href="#">Risk Assessment Framework</a></li> </ul>	5-10 minutes max
<b>STRATEGIC LEAD</b>	Wrap up. What are the next steps? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Agree on: who is doing what? If meeting with parents/ students, clarify purpose, and time frame. Ask: Is there anything that needs to be clarified? Is everyone clear on the next steps and how we will proceed and on your individual roles moving forward?</li> <li>» Decide whether the student should be included in the “Students of Concern Register” for on-going monitoring.</li> </ul>	

## Annex 8: Commonly Held Myths About Child Abuse And Neglect

### **Myth: Child abuse is carried out by strangers.**

**Fact:** Research indicates that 90% of abuse is from domestic causes and is committed by individuals known to the child. International school communities tend to have families that move often and are separated from their extended families in their home of-road. When abuse is within the family, the transient lifestyle then increases the risk to international school students who tend not to have access to outside resource, and therefore cannot get help.

### **Myth: Learning about child safeguarding is harmful to your children.**

**Fact:** Research indicates that developmentally appropriate education makes children more confident and able to react to dangerous situations. Teaching using a specific population context increases protective behavior.

### **Myth: Abuse education is sex education.**

**Fact:** Research-based programs prepare students to develop the skills and attitudes to keep themselves safe from perpetrators, and behaviors that include bullying, harassment and other forms of exploitation.

### **Myth: Abuse is a matter of culture; physical or sexual abuse falls within the norms of some cultures and is acceptable.**

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**Fact:** The reality is that there no excuse for child abuse! No culture supports harming children.

**Myth: Child abuse is a result of poverty and happens in low socioeconomic circumstances.**

**Fact:** Research indicates that child abuse occurs in all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and culture sectors of society. A common characteristic of an abusive family is isolation, such as that commonly found in our international school families who move often or are separated from their extended families at home.

**Myth: International schools do not have to report abuse to local authorities.**

**Fact:** International schools are bound by the laws of the host country. Furthermore, international schools are legally and ethically liable for any violation of existing laws related to repeated, and with a social or interpersonal power imbalance, where one person feels they do not have the power to stop it.

## Annex 9: Lao PDR Law

### Lao PDR Laws

Individuals should approach the respective Naiban. The Naiban will then speak to the parents. If the situation does not improve, the Naiban should be approached a second time. Following this, the case would be brought to the attention of a prosecutor.

Lao Laws are on file with the Head of School and Child Wellbeing and Safeguarding Team.