

## Handling allegations of abuse



## Child protection guidelines

**This leaflet explains your role in ensuring the children in your care stay safe and what to do if a child is subjected to abuse.**

**It is applicable to parents, carers, caregivers and SHAMBA staff and volunteers**

### How should you behave towards the child when receiving an allegation of abuse?

- You should treat all allegations seriously and act as if you believe the child's story.
- Tell the child they are right to talk to you.
- Reassure the child that they are not to blame.
- Do not promise to keep secrets, as there may be an obligation to report the abuse.
- Explain the reporting procedure and what will happen next in a manner appropriate for the child's age and maturity.

### SHAMBA's commitment

- As caregivers SHAMBA's staff have a responsibility to adhere to these guidelines and to report cases of suspected abuse.
- SHAMBA has a strict confidentiality policy. Everyone working with SHAMBA protects information shared in confidence by a child or their family. Such information will only be shared via the reporting process and by relevant SHAMBA personnel.

The leaflet attempts to answer five questions:

1. What is abuse?
2. Why do children need protection?
3. What is your duty under the law?
4. Where can you go to report abuse?
5. How should you behave towards the child?

## The need for protection from abuse

### What is abuse?

Abuse is an act of ill-treatment that endangers a child. There are four main types of abuse:

- **Physical Abuse**—e.g. hitting, shaking, burning, torture.
- **Sexual Abuse**— e.g. rape, incest, early and forced marriage.
- **Emotional or Psychological Abuse**— e.g. humiliating treatment such as shouting, name-calling, persistent shaming, belittling and isolation.
- **Neglect**—is **intentional** or **unintentional** failure to provide children with care and their rights, resulting in significant impairment of their health or development.

### Why children need protection?

- They have rights under international conventions.
- Because they are young they have limited capacity and are therefore vulnerable to being taken advantage of.
- Children who are abused do poorly at school and in later life and often become abusers themselves

## Reporting cases of abuse

### What is your duty under the law?

As a parent or guardian you have the responsibility to:

- Protect the child from neglect, discrimination, violence.
- Provide good guidance and care to ensure survival and development.
- Ensure that the child is cared for by a competent person when you are absent.
- Register the birth of the child with names of parents and guardians.

### Where can you go to report abuse?

At community level, abuse can be reported to:

- Caregivers
- Rural Health Motivators
- Traditional leaders
- Lihombe Lekukhalela
- Community Police

Abuse can also be reported to SHAMBA staff who will refer cases to the relevant agency.

Or abuse can be reported directly to:

- Police
- Ministry of Education
- Department of Social Welfare
- Deputy Prime Minister's Office