

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

This policy was approved by the University Board on October 21, 2020. This Policy was revised in April 2022

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Preamble

Child maltreatment¹ is a major legal and public health issue. Information available in Lebanon and around the world reveal the magnitude of the problem and highlights its different types and manifestations. Such information also sheds light on the impact of child maltreatment on children's health, educational and psychological development (National Public Health Institute of Quebec, 2018). According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and as endorsed by the World Health Organization (WHO), a child is defined as every human being below the age of eighteen years. Child maltreatment, as per Article 19 of the CRC and the WHO's INSPIRE Strategies, encompasses physical and/or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, commercial or other exploitation, resulting in direct or potential harm, whether immediate or long-term, to the child's health, survival, development and dignity, within relationships of responsibility, trust or power (WHO, 2016).

Presentation of USJ

Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (Saint Joseph University of Beirut - USJ) is an institution of French language and culture. Founded and led by the Jesuits, the vision and mission of USJ are built on values that combine namely the Jesuit educational philosophy, autonomy, collaboration, participation, freedom of conscience, political independence and social commitment, all this around an academic, professional and ethical training of excellence, completed by an authentic culture that is founded on the issues of sense-making, at the service of the promotion of the persons. (<https://www.usj.edu.lb/universite/chartes.php>).

USJ Commitment to Child Protection

In this spirit, USJ has pledged to preserve and protect children's safety² at all times, within the scope of its authority. The courses offered at various schools, the research conducted and the interventions planned by members of the USJ Community, use a language and a set of actions that respect and do not inflict any

1. Physical abuse involves the use of force or violence: hitting (with the hand, the fist, the foot, an object, etc.), biting, burning, poisoning, drugging or forcing someone to consume dangerous substances (alcohol, tobacco, narcotics, etc.), choking, shaking, shoving, etc.

Psychological abuse involves the use of humiliating, threatening, reprimanding, intimidating or frightening language.

Sexual abuse consists of forcing or inciting an individual to take part in sexual activities, and includes touching the genitals, sexual intercourse, exhibitionism, and pornography.

Neglect is the continued failure of the adult responsible for the child to appropriately care for the child and cater to their essential needs within their available capacity. This can be exhibited through poor hygiene, inadequate nutrition, lack of medical care, school deprivation, etc.

Child exploitation refers to the use of children either to satisfy another individual's needs or to achieve economic or sexual gain, usually prompting an unfair, cruel and detrimental treatment of the child.

2. Child protection is the responsibility of the Institution, which shall ensure that its staff, operations and programs do not harm children, meaning they do not expose children to risks of harm and abuse, and that all of the Institution's children safety concerns within the communities in which it operates are reported to the competent authorities.

emotional, physical or psychological harm on children. This commitment has been also translated into the creation of the University Observatory for Children and Youth in Lebanon (OEIL) in 2006, whose mission is to carry out research, collect information, conduct studies and publish reports and documents on issues related to childhood and youth in Lebanon.

USJ is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for children who take part in its programs and activities, attend USJ Daycare, or benefit from the care offered at the University's Health Care Centers, such as the University Medical Center, *Hôtel-Dieu de France* (HDF), or the Medical Genetics Unit (UGM), as well as any of the units under USJ's governance. Therefore, appropriate security measures are applied to staff and students involved with children in the context of their work or studies. Moreover, Child Abuse Identification and Reporting Procedures have been in place at HDF since 2009, managed by the Pediatrics Department, in collaboration with child protection services in Lebanon. Other procedures have also been developed to ensure unrestricted reporting of worrisome situations on campus.

Policy Objective

This Policy affirms USJ's stance on child protection in carrying out its mission. It aims to inform and raise awareness among members of the USJ community about the principles and guidelines they must follow when engaging with children. Members shall be aware of their obligations to identify and respond to child protection and welfare issues in accordance with the procedures that will be established.

The framework of this Policy is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (<https://www.humanium.org/en/convention/text/>), Lebanese Law No. 422/2002 on the Protection of Children in Violation of the Law or Exposed to Danger, the WHO INSPIRE Strategies, the UN Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (<https://www.who.int/publications/item/inspire-seven-strategies-for-ending-violence-against-children>) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Indicators related to children (<https://data.unicef.org/children-sustainable-development-goals/>).

The Policy shall be disseminated to the entire USJ community through the University's official communication tools and media. It is available in French and Arabic and is publicly available on the University's website (www.usj.edu.lb). Posters shall also be displayed in frequently visited areas.

The Policy shall be reviewed annually and on an *ad hoc* basis by the OEIL Steering Committee.

Concerned Individuals

This Policy applies to the entire USJ community and its partners.

The USJ community includes:

- Staff, students, full-time and part-time instructors
- Volunteers and interns

Partners include:

- Entrepreneurs providing services within the University
- Consultants
- Field internship supervisors
- Guests and visitors

Responsibility and Scope

The Rector is legally responsible before the government for the implementation of the Child Protection Policy at the University. He shall be assisted by the First Vice-Rector, the Child Protection Committee and the University Board which oversees the implementation of the present Policy and the enforcement of the procedures arising from it. The Rector shall be informed, through an annual report, of all matters related to the implementation of the Policy.

It is the duty of all University members to abide by the Child Protection Policy. Deans, directors, heads of departments, and administrators shall assume primary responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the Policy within their respective schools, campuses, departments, laboratories, daycare, hospital or health care centers.

Child Protection Committee

The role of the Child Protection Committee is to develop the University's Child Protection Strategy, validate all necessary procedures for the implementation of this Policy and ensure follow-up. The members of the Child Protection Committee have been appointed by the Rector and are as follows:

- Prof. Salim Daccache, SJ, Rector: recteur@usj.edu.lb
- Prof. Salah Abou Jaoude, SJ, First Vice-Rector, Dean of the Faculty of Religious Studies: salah.aboujaoude@usj.edu.lb
- Prof. Michel Scheuer, SJ, President of the USJ-HDF Ethics Board: michel.scheuer@usj.edu.lb
- Myrna Gannage, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities Ramez G. Chagoury: myrna.gannage@usj.edu.lb
- Lena Gannage, Dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science: lena.gannage@usj.edu.lb
- Michèle Kosremelli Asmar, Director of the Higher Institute of Public Health – Faculty of Medicine and Director of the Observatory on Childhood and Youth in Lebanon: michele.asmar@usj.edu.lb
- Rima Moawad, Director of the School of Social Work: rima.moawad@usj.edu.lb
- Bernard Gerbaka, Ex-President of the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN), Head of the Pediatrics Department at the Faculty of Medicine and Head of the Child Protection Unit at HDF: pediatre@usj.edu.lb & child@usj.edu.lb
- Sarah Zahreddine, Child Protection Delegate, Administrative Coordinator in charge of staff records at the Department of Human Resources

Child Protection Delegate

A Child Protection Delegate (CPD) shall be appointed by the University, and their duties shall include:

- Acting as a primary contact for internal and/or external child protection issues, concerns and referrals
- Developing, promoting and overseeing the Child Protection Policy and related procedures
- Ensuring that staff, upon recruitment, have read the Child Protection Policy and have signed the Policy Acceptance and Compliance Form
- Coordinating child protection training and regular staff training
- Coordinating child protection self-audits
- Coordinating Policy enforcement audits (at least once every three years)
- Developing triennial child protection action plans
- Supporting the operational management through child protection counseling

Principles and Guidelines

- 1 The University adopts a zero-tolerance policy toward child abuse and maltreatment.
- 2 All children have the right to be protected from all forms of maltreatment and risk.
- 3 All individuals hired by USJ have a responsibility to support the protection of children.
- 4 The University owes a duty of care and respectful treatment to children with whom it works directly, with whom it is in contact or who are affected by its activities.
- 5 All child protection measures are taken in the best interest of the child.
- 6 The University shall not hire an individual who may pose a risk to children.
- 7 The University shall not support any academic activity that does not comply with this Policy.
- 8 Courses offered at the University must include information on child protection.
- 9 When research involving young people under the age of 18, specific ethical considerations shall be added to the standard ethical approval process for research projects.
- 10 When information and visual images (photos or videos) are used, the University shall ensure that children, families and communities are portrayed with respect and dignity.
- 11 The University's partners and collaborators must be committed to child protection.
- 12 Businesses operating on University premises, using its facilities or receiving its support, are required to comply with this Policy.
- 13 The University shall organize regular training sessions on child protection for members of the USJ community and inform them of any updates to this Policy and its procedures.
- 14 The University is committed to raising the awareness of all those who collaborate with the University on child protection matters.
- 15 Members of the USJ community shall behave with the utmost respect toward children and ensure their safety in accordance with this Policy.
- 16 All members of the USJ Community shall sign the Policy Acceptance and Compliance Form and are required to abide by it.
- 17 The University shall assist its partners in meeting minimum child protection requirements.
- 18 All contracts and Memoranda of Understanding must comply with the USJ Child Protection Policy.

Prevention

All USJ programs and activities shall be subject to a maltreatment risk assessment. Appropriate measures shall be adopted and integrated into all stages of these programs to minimize risks to children and promote their well-being.

USJ shall ensure the highest standards in its recruitment and auditing policies. Recommendation letters from the previous employer and a reference person, as well as a criminal record, are required to verify the candidate's conduct with regard to child protection. A self-declaration letter shall be signed by the candidate, attesting that they have never been convicted of any form of crime and child maltreatment. The Human Resources Department shall carry out the necessary checks and authenticate these documents. All individuals shall sign the Child Protection Code of Conduct (Annex A).

USJ shall include the following two clauses in its agreements with partners:

- 1- USJ has pledged to preserve and protect children's safety at all times in carrying out its missions. Therefore, USJ students/interns and professionals are committed to deploy all their efforts to prevent maltreatment and all different forms of abuse in their host organization. They are required to:
 - Respect the Child Protection Code of Conduct of the host organization if applicable, and that of the University, if necessary;
 - Identify risk situations that endanger children, within the context of activities held at the host organization;
 - Be familiar with and follow the identification, referral and reporting procedures established by the host organization and, if necessary, by the University.

In the event of abuse or maltreatment of a child by a USJ student/intern or professional, the host organization shall send a written notification to inform the internship supervisor appointed by USJ.

- 2- Agreements signed by USJ with partners shall include a declaration stating that partners who do not have a child protection policy shall abide by USJ's Policy or develop their own policy as a partnership condition.

Raising University Community Awareness

Members of the USJ community shall receive training on child protection to protect children and safeguard their rights. They will be held accountable for reporting any risk or danger of maltreatment, in accordance with the University's Abuse Declaration Procedure (Annex B).

Individuals involved in direct activities with children will receive in-depth training within 6 months of their recruitment. Partners shall be informed of their responsibilities under the Policy at the time of agreement with the University. The University shall sign a Statement of Commitment to Child Protection with partners, within the framework of the conventions.

Children and families shall be informed of the University's commitment to child protection, the person to contact and the procedure to follow should they have any concerns about a child.

The University is committed to assessing on an annual basis the training needs in child protection for all individuals working with children in various USJ bodies and to facilitate their access to training on this topic: CPD, staff, instructors, and students working with children within the University.

All efforts will be made to identify available resources to meet the needs.

With the support of the Child Protection Committee, the CPD is encouraged to actively seek trainers and/or training programs available at the local, national, or international level that would be adapted to the Lebanese context and that of the University.

Grievance Follow-Up

The University adopts the appropriate procedure to follow-up on any allegation reported by an individual. This procedure consists of the following steps: collecting observed facts, informing the Dean/Director of the school or department concerned, convening the Expert Committee³, assessing the situation and taking the appropriate measures (Annex B).

USJ will take all declarations seriously and is committed to protecting, at all times, the confidentiality of information in the best interest of the child and their family. USJ will handle complaints in a manner that does not re-traumatize the child.

Should the complaint come directly from the child, the contact person is expected to accept what the child says, without insisting on obtaining additional information, and without investigating, questioning or confronting the alleged aggressor. The child shall be informed of the procedure to be followed.

All reported facts shall be recorded in a report form.

The necessary allegation follow-up tools shall be annexed to this Policy.

Control and Assessment

Child protection shall be integrated into the University's risk management process. The University Board shall ensure, through follow-up on reports prepared by the OEIL Steering Committee, that child protection measures are well implemented and effective.

This Policy shall be reviewed annually and on an *ad hoc* basis in order to identify and address emerging issues. The present Policy was approved by the University Board on October 21, 2020.

³- The Expert Committee is appointed by the Rector. It shall include a psychologist, a social worker, a doctor, the CPD, and the Head of the school or department concerned by the grievance.

Annex A: Code of Conduct

Name:

Status:

<input type="checkbox"/> Administrative staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Part-time instructor	<input type="checkbox"/> Full-time instructor
<input type="checkbox"/> Student	<input type="checkbox"/> Intern	<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer
<input type="checkbox"/> Parents/guardian	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: specify	

I, the undersigned, acknowledge that I have read and understood USJ's Child Protection Policy, and commit, within the framework of my activities, to:

- 1- Adhere to USJ's Child Protection Policy and Procedure.
- 2- Behave in accordance with the rules dictated by my function.
- 3- Maintain a safe and secure environment for children.
- 4- Apply all necessary measures to protect children against maltreatment.
- 5- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with special needs.
- 6- Treat children with respect regardless of their race, sex, nationality, language, and religion, and value their ideas and opinions.
- 7- Refrain from language or behavior that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, humiliating or culturally inappropriate towards children.
- 8- Refrain from using physical means or corporal punishment to discipline a child.
- 9- Avoid any behavior that may cause emotional or psychological harm to a child.
- 10- Refrain from engaging children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual intercourse or activities, including payment for sexual services or acts.
- 11- Refrain from hiring children for work that is inappropriate for their age or stage of development, or that may expose them to a significant risk of injury.
- 12- Immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse or violations of the Policy in accordance with USJ's procedures.
- 13- Protect information about children who have been subjected to maltreatment, as this may put them or their families at risk of harm.
- 14- Use computers, cell phones, video cameras, cameras and social media networks appropriately, and never exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material by any means.
- 15- Obtain the informed consent of the child and their parent or legal guardian before photographing or filming a child, and explain how the photograph or film will be used.
- 16- Ensure that photographs and films present the child in a dignified and respectful manner.
- 17- Ensure that all photographs and films uploaded to social media networks do not include any information that could help identify the child.
- 18- Understand that it is my duty, as a person associated with USJ, to demonstrate common sense and avoid actions or behavior that could be construed as child exploitation or maltreatment.

Name and Signature:

Annex B: Abuse Declaration Procedure

Child Abuse Referral Procedure

