



## MARGADARSHI SOCIETY® KALABURAGI

[www.facebook.com/margadarshisociety](http://www.facebook.com/margadarshisociety)

[www.twitter.com/margadarshi2002](http://www.twitter.com/margadarshi2002)

### PREVENTION OF SEXUAL HARRASSMENT POLICY

#### INTRODUCTION:

Margadarshi Society®, a non-profit organization is working for the marginalized and neglected children is registered under Societies Act came into existence in the year 2002. The society works for the children without any discrimination of caste, creed or color and brings them to the mainstream of the society by providing them with education, and necessary support. At present, the society is working for 16 years in Kalaburagi, Raichur and Belagavi districts. The society is managed by the Board of Directors with professional zest and concern for Children and is headed by a Chairman and Secretary.

#### Aims of Margadarshi Society

**VISION:** *Margadarshi envisages women and child-friendly environment in sustained society*

**MISSION:** *To make Kalaburagi as a model district ensuring women and child rights, in difficult condition by sensitizing and empowering community groups and making the civil society, government and allied systems and corporate accountable towards their development*

#### OBJECTIVES:

- To rescue and restoration of children who are separated from their families.
- To enhance the quality of lives of the children, through non-formal education, psychological support, and nurture.
- Research to understand the complex issues connected with rehabilitation.
- Reinforce women and children to self-identify, confidence in their abilities, and affection with family to overcome isolation, through orientation camps.
- Create awareness among women, children, public, authorities and other organizations regarding the dangers of trafficking, physical and sexual abuse, child marriage and ways of combating and preventing of the same.
- Lobby with Government Departments such as Women and Child Development, Revenue, Education, Labor, Social Welfare, Health and Family Welfare, Police, Railway Authorities and Organizations working with the children to protect the child rights and child issues through forming local committees.



We, the members of our governing board, staff, volunteers, and associates share a common commitment to protect, promote and uphold the Rights of all Women- particularly those with a disability- as outlined in The **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013**. An Act to provide protection against sexual harassment of women at workplace and for the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

### **Purpose**

Margararshi Society® aspires to create a workplace free from harassment in any form, based on factors such as gender, caste, color, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, disability, veteran status, marital status, sexual orientation or any other employment status protected by applicable law. To maintain a safe and inclusive work culture, Margadarshi Society® takes a zero-tolerance stance on this behavior.

The Parliament has passed the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill in 2013 which makes it mandatory that all offices, hospitals, institutions and other workplaces should have an internal redress mechanism for complaints related to sexual harassment based on the guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court of India.

To promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons, particularly women and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

To ensure that all staff, interns, volunteers, consultants and members of the Governing Board work together, own the responsibility and share accountability to encourage the development of an ethos which respects the dignity and human rights of all persons in all its dealings and in all settings in which they work.

To ensure that any woman who is a victim or witness of any abuse, neglect or exploitation is treated with dignity and concern for her wellbeing and safety

### **Scope**

This Policy applies to all staff, contractors and casual employees who work for Margadarshi Society®. It also applies to visitors to Margadarshi Society® offices.

### **Date of adoption:**

This policy adopted on **16<sup>th</sup> December 2018**, after being presented and deliberated at the meeting of the Governing Board.

### **Applicability:**

The following persons come under the purview of the POSH Policy:

- Members of the Governing Board
- Employees
- Volunteers, interns,
- Consultants, and
- Visitors who come to Margadarshi Society® for any purpose



#### **Dissemination:**

- This POSH Policy is a public document and is available on our website, and on request at our Human Resources Department or any of our offices.
- It is officially handed over to all new recruits, volunteers, consultants, and interns and is an official part of any agreement with our partners.

#### **Assistance and Contact Information:**

For any assistance or clarification regarding this policy please contact the POSH ICC Committee at telephone no. or at mail id

#### **Definition of the workplace:**

- This covers all working places of Margadarshi Society®, including residential campuses.

#### **Duties of Employer**

The Act enlists the duties of the employer as follows:

- Provide a safe working environment at the workplace which shall include safety from the persons coming into contact at the workplace.
- Display at any conspicuous place in the workplace, the penal consequences of sexual harassments and the order constituting, the Internal Committee under subsection (1) of section 4.
- Organize workshops and awareness programmes at regular intervals for sensitizing the employees with the provisions of the Act and orientation programmes for the members of the Internal Committee in the manner as may be prescribed.
- Provide the necessary facilities to the Internal Committee for dealing with the complaint and conducting an inquiry.
- Assist in securing the attendance of respondent and witnesses before the Internal Committee.
- Make available such information to the Internal Committee as it may require having regard to the complaint made
- Provide assistance to the woman if she so chooses to file a complaint in relation to the offense under the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860) or any other law for the time being in force;
- Cause to initiate action, under the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860) or any other law for the time being in force, against the perpetrator, or if the aggrieved woman so desires, where the perpetrator is not an employee, in the workplace at which the incident of sexual harassment took place;
- Treat sexual harassment as a misconduct under the service rules and initiate action for such misconduct;
- Monitor the timely submission of reports by the Internal Committee.

#### **Key Responsibilities of ICC**

To effectively address workplace sexual harassment complaints, Complaints Committees must first be aware of their key responsibilities, some of which are highlighted below:

- Be thoroughly prepared
- Know the Act, Policy and/or relevant Service Rules
- Gather and record all relevant information
- Determine the main issues in the complaint
- Prepare relevant interview questions
- Conduct necessary interviews
- Ensure parties are made aware of the process and their rights/responsibilities within it



- Analyze information gathered
- Prepare the report with findings/recommendations

### Knowledge, Skills, Training for ICC Members

Dealing with workplace sexual harassment complaints is often complex. Hence Complaints Committee/s must possess critical skills/capacity to effectively carry out their role. That includes a sound grasp of the Act, Vishaka Guidelines, applicable Service Rules, relevant laws and an understanding of workplace sexual harassment and related issues. Complaints Committee skills must include an ability to synthesize information i.e. relevant documents, the law, and interviews. They should also be able to communicate effectively, write clearly, listen actively and conduct interviews. They should be competent at showing empathy, being impartial and being thorough. They should be able to identify sexual harassment and its impact. A Complaints Committee/s is required to be trained in both skill and capacity to carry out a fair and informed inquiry into a complaint of workplace sexual harassment. An absence of such training will lead to unequal and unfair results, which can cost employers, employees, complainants as well as respondents.

### DEFINITIONS

#### 1. Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment includes any unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that could be reasonably expected to make someone feel offended, humiliated or intimidated.

It includes situations where a person is asked to engage in sexual activity as a condition of that person's employment, as well as situations which create an environment which is hostile, intimidating or humiliating for the recipient.

- A. Sexual harassment can involve one or more incidents and actions constituting harassment may be physical, verbal and non-verbal. Examples of contact or behavior which constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:
- Physical:** Unwelcome physical contact including patting, pinching, stroking, kissing, hugging, fondling, or inappropriate touching, and Physical violence including sexual assault.
- Verbal:** Comments on a worker's appearance, clothing, body, age, private life, etc., Sexual comments, stories and jokes, the use of job-related threats or rewards to solicit sexual favors
- Non-verbal:** Display of sexually explicit or suggestive material, Sexually-suggestive gestures, persistent watching, whistling and Leering
- Sexual advances:** Repeated and unwanted social invitations for dates or physical intimacy, Insults based on the sex of the worker, condescending or paternalistic remarks, and sending sexually explicit messages (by phone or by email)
- B. The following circumstances if it occurs or is present in relation to any sexually determined act or behavior amount to sexual harassment:
- The implied or explicit promise of preferential treatment in employment
  - The implied or explicit threat of detrimental treatment in employment
  - Implied or explicit threat about the present or future employment status
  - Interference with the person's work or creating an intimidating or offensive or hostile work environment
  - Humiliating treatment likely to affect a person's health or safety



**2. Complainant:** In relation to the workplace, a person of any age whether employed or not, who alleges to have been subjected to any act of sexual harassment

**3. Respondent:** A person against whom a complaint of sexual harassment has been made by the aggrieved person

**4. Employee:** A person employed at the workplace for any work on regular, temporary ad-hoc or daily wage basis

**5. Workplace:** Any place where the aggrieved person visits in connection with his/her work in the course of employment with Margadarshi Society®

**6. Employer:** A person responsible for the management, supervision, and control of the workplace

#### **Guidelines for Community / Field Staff:**

- In the case of lady staff members, only those who have completed one month in the Margadarshi Society® community can undertake home visits. In these cases, too, they must go along with an experienced staff member in the field. In such cases the following precautions need to be adhered to :
- Ensure specific daily plan is submitted to the immediate reporting authority to enable the movement to be tracked.
- In case a home environment is not conducive to a therapy/ counseling / educational session, request for the session to be carried out in a common community center
- Note to be submitted to the immediate reporting authority giving details of such cases.

#### **Internal Complaints Committee**

Margadarshi Society® will constitute ICC (Internal Complaints Committee) as a mechanism for redressal of complaints related to Sexual Harassment. The committee will be chaired by a Margadarshi Society® employee holding at least the position of administrator. The committee will have 8 other members comprising of 5 ladies Margadarshi Society® staff, 1 Margadarshi Society® staff (from the middle management level) and 1 member of the Governing Board and 1 external member.

#### **The committee is responsible for:**

- Receiving complaints of sexual harassment at the workplace
- Initiating and conducting an inquiry as per established procedure
- Submitting findings and recommendations of inquiries
- Coordinating with the employer in implementing appropriate action
- Maintaining strict confidentiality throughout the process as per established guidelines

#### **A complainant (an employee of Margadarshi Society®) who believes he/she has been sexually harassed should:**

- If comfortable to do so, inform the alleged harasser that his/her behavior is offensive, unwelcome, against the organization's policy and should stop.
- He/she should take a note of the date, time and location of the incident/s
- If not comfortable to confront the alleged harasser or if the unwelcome behavior continues, report to the nominated Complaint Redressal Committee
- If this is inappropriate, speak to another senior member of the organization, the head of the organization or a member of the Governing Board



### Timeline of complaint and committee's action

- The complaint must be lodged within *3 months* from the date of incident/last incident by the aggrieved person or his/her friend, relative, Co-worker or any person having the knowledge of the incident
- After receiving the complaint, the informal resolution (if possible) between the complainant and the respondent is completed within *2 weeks*
- The respondent replies with all supporting documents within *10 days* of receiving the complaint, if a formal investigation is initiated

The Complaint Redressal Committee's final report is completed and submitted to Margadarshi Society's director within **90 days** of initiating the formal investigation

### Conciliation

- The Internal Committee may, at the behest of the aggrieved woman, before beginning its investigation take steps to settle the matter between the aggrieved woman and the accused through conciliation.
- No monetary settlement may be made through conciliation.
- The Act and the Central Rules spell out implementation procedures with regard to conciliation

### Guidelines for receiving a complaint

Dealing with incidents of harassment is not like any other type of dispute. Complainants may be embarrassed and distressed and therefore it requires tact and discretion while receiving the complaint.

A Committee member listens to the complaint and the complainant is assured that Margadarshi Society® takes the concerns seriously. Written notes are taken while listening to the person and most words used by the complainant are recorded. A clear description of the incident in simple and direct terms is prepared and details are confirmed by the complainant. All notes are kept strictly confidential. Complainant's agreement is taken to proceed with the formal investigation.

The complainant is advised that although the process is confidential, the respondent needs to be informed and any witnesses and persons directly involved in the complaint process will also learn of the complainant's identity.

When a complaint is received, the Complaint Redressal Committee will:

- Obtain and record a full, step-by-step account of the incident/s
- Ensure the organization's process for handling the complaint is understood
- Ascertain the complainant's preferred outcome, e.g. an apology, the behavior to cease, a change in working arrangements
- Agree on the next step: informal resolution or formal investigation
- Keep a confidential record of all details of this discussion and subsequent steps in the process.

### Prohibition of Publication

- As per Sec. 16, the contents of the complaint, the identity and personal details of the parties involved, any information relating to conciliation and inquiry proceedings, recommendations of the Internal Committee and the actions taken shall not be published, communicated or made known to the public, press, and media.
- Any person who is entrusted with the above documents shall be liable for the penalty, in accordance with the provisions of the service rules, if he/she contravenes regulations.



### **Informal resolution**

Once the complaint is received regarding sexual harassment, the Committee may take steps to conciliate between the complainant and the respondent. It is possible if a step is requested by the aggrieved person. It is just a practical mechanism through which issues are resolved or misunderstandings cleared. If an informal resolution is chosen by the complainant, the Complaint Redressal Committee will take recourse to the following process:

- Inform the alleged harasser of the complainant and provide an opportunity to respond
- Ensure both parties understand their rights and responsibilities under the organization's policy
- If possible, mediate an outcome that is satisfactory for the complainant
- Ensure that confidentiality is maintained
- Follow up to ensure the behavior does not re-occur.

The Committee provides copies of the settlement to complainant & respondent. Once the action is implemented, it shall be recorded that no further inquiry shall be conducted on the complaint.

### **Formal investigation**

If an informal resolution fails and a formal investigation is requested by the complainant, the Complaint Redressal Committee will take the necessary steps to:

- Afford natural justice to all involved
- Interview all directly concerned, separately
- Interview witnesses, separately
- Keep records of the interviews and investigation
- Ensure confidentiality and minimize disclosure
- Decide as to whether there is enough evidence that a reasonable person could conclude, on the balance of probabilities (i.e. it's more likely than not), that an incident/incident of sexual harassment have occurred

### **Manner of inquiry**

The complainant should submit the complaint along with supporting documents. Upon receipt of the complaint, the committee shall send one copy of the complaint to the respondent. The respondent receives the complaint and sends his/her reply to the committee. The Committee shall make an inquiry into the complaint in accordance with the principle of natural justice. While conducting the inquiry, a minimum of three committee members including the president of the Committee should be present.

The decision of the committee is final. The employer is requested to take action on the respondent as recommended by the committee. No legal practitioner can represent any party at any stage of the inquiry.

### **Inquiry procedure**

All proceedings of the inquiry are documented. The documentation shall be shared with the complainant and the respondent if requested. The committee shall interview the respondent separately. Any witnesses produced by the respondent are also interviewed by the committee. If the complainant or respondent desires to cross-examine the witnesses, it shall be facilitated by the committee.

### **Interim action**

During the process of formal investigation, Margadarshi Society® management shall determine an appropriate action, which may include a change of duties for the harasser and change to working arrangements.



If the incidents were frequent and/or severe, they may take recourse to the dismissal of the respondent.

In case it cannot be determined by the required test, that an incident/incident of sexual harassment have occurred, may still act to ensure the proper functioning of the workplace without prejudice to any party.

The management will also continue to closely monitor the situation and provide further training for the staff if required.

When the interim action is implemented, the employer shall inform the committee regarding the action taken.

#### Termination of inquiry

The committee may terminate the process of an inquiry if both the complainant and respondent are absent for three consecutive hearings without giving any reason in writing. If the committee concludes that the complaint was malicious, it can request the employer to take appropriate action against the complainant.

#### Submission of Annual Reports

- The Internal Committee is required to prepare and submit an annual report to the employer.
- The employer is required to include in its report the number of cases filed, and their disposal under this Act in the annual report of the organization.

#### Review of this Policy

The committee will be dissolved every 3<sup>rd</sup> year and a new Chairman and members will be nominated. All nominations, including for vacancies caused by attrition or other reasons, will be made by a team consisting of 2 Board Members and 2 Management Employees of Margadarshi Society®

#### Conclusion

There is an official obligation and an individual obligation to fulfill the intent of this Policy. The Policy will be prominently displayed in all Margadarshi Society® office premises and it is expected that every employee will have a working knowledge of permissible activities in the workplace and will seek guidance from the HR department.

Details of Margadarshi Society® ICC-Internal Complaints Committee members are mentioned below:

- Chairperson: Maralamma S. Ratnadagi
- Dy. Chairperson: Kavita M. Sedamkar
- HR: Manjunath K. Kambali
- Member: Kavita S. Jambagi
- Member: Saraswati A. Shinde
- Member: Padmavati A. Desai
- Member: Vidyavathi Guttedar
- Governing Board Member: Shilpa Sundar
- External Member: Seema Kunkeri

Signature of Board President:

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> December 2018

Signature of Secretary/ Executive Director: