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Child Protection Policy (Dama al-aman) in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi

(October 2023)

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Section One:

First: Introduction

● Introduction

Building upon the ongoing endeavors at both federal and local levels regarding child protection, the Policy considers relevant legal provisions and legislations, such as the Federal Law No. 3 of 2016 regarding children's rights (Wadeema's Law) and its executive regulations, international agreements ratified by the State and other relevant legislations. It was created in the context of the paramount significance of an effective response to mitigate the risks and harm resulting from detected cases of child abuse and the necessity of activating the roles of all concerned parties, such as the family, society, private and government entities, third sector institutions and service providers, to ensure the necessary protection and support for all children. This Policy is a complementary effort and an integrated universal framework that focuses on the crucial roles and essential actions of all relevant entities to activate the child protection system in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, in accordance with all federal and local laws and policies. It underlines the comprehensive procedures to be followed and the tools to be used by relevant entities and child protection specialists in dealing with reported cases. It is noteworthy that the Child Protection Policy (Dama Al-Aman) in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi was developed in cooperation with strategic partners in the child protection system in the Emirate.



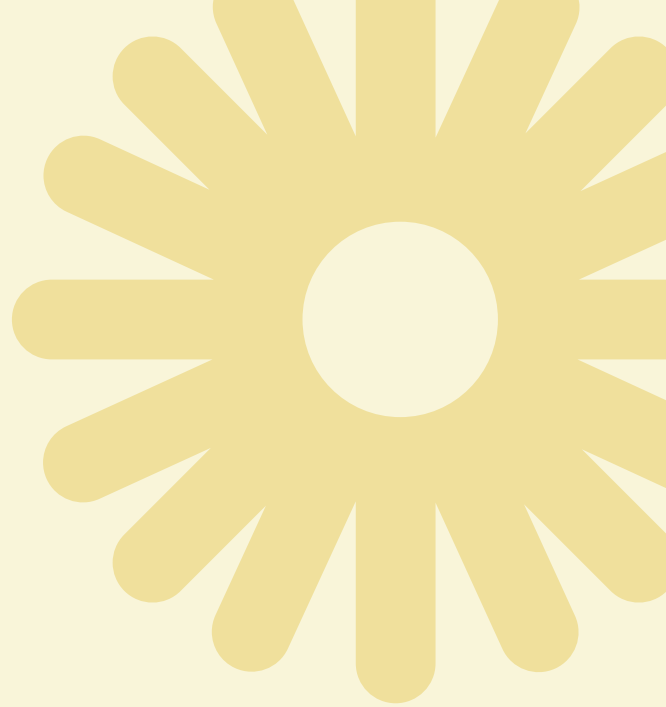
● Definitions

In applying the provisions of this Policy, the following terms will be used according to the definitions shown next to each of them, unless the text notes otherwise:

Term	Definition
State	United Arab Emirates (UAE)
Emirate	Emirate of Abu Dhabi
Federal Law	Law No. (3) of 2016 regarding Children's Rights, "Wadeema's Law"
Child	Every human being born alive and under eighteen years of age
Caregiver	The person legally responsible for the child or the person entrusted with the custody and care of the child.
Children's rights	Children's rights detailed in the Federal Law include basic, family, health, social, cultural, and educational rights, and the right to protection.
Child protection	All measures and procedures that must be taken to protect and support children in the event of exposure to risks that may cause them harm.
Child Protection System	An integrated and comprehensive system that aims to prevent and detect cases of child abuse and respond immediately to them, through specific procedures.
Child abuse	Any act or omission that would lead to harm to the child and prevent his/her upbringing and development in a sound, safe and healthy manner.

Term	Definition
Child Protection Inter-Agency Case Management Manual	The detailed guide issued by the Department of Community Development in coordination with stakeholders and outlining the approach to be adopted by various stakeholders and the common standards for child protection in the Emirate. It addresses the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder, as well as the procedures and tools necessary for the effective management of cases of child abuse by stakeholders. It also documents the services available to children who have been subjected to abuse, those at risk and their families.
Relevant Entities	Local entities concerned with child protection and with implementing this Policy.
Child Protection Specialist	The person licensed and assigned to preserve the rights of the child and protect him/her within the limits of their powers, as stipulated in the applicable legislations.
Child Protection Unit	Organizational units affiliated with the relevant authorities responsible for implementing child protection mechanisms and measures stipulated in the legislations.
Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS)	An online and offline system containing recorded information relating to all child abuse reports, steps taken and services provided.
Risks	All potential (external or internal) threats and their impact on the safety of the child, family and surrounding community.
High-risk	A high-risk level is determined by the initial safety and risk assessment in the Child Protection Inter-agency Case Management Manual and corresponds to a high probability of harm occurring at any time.

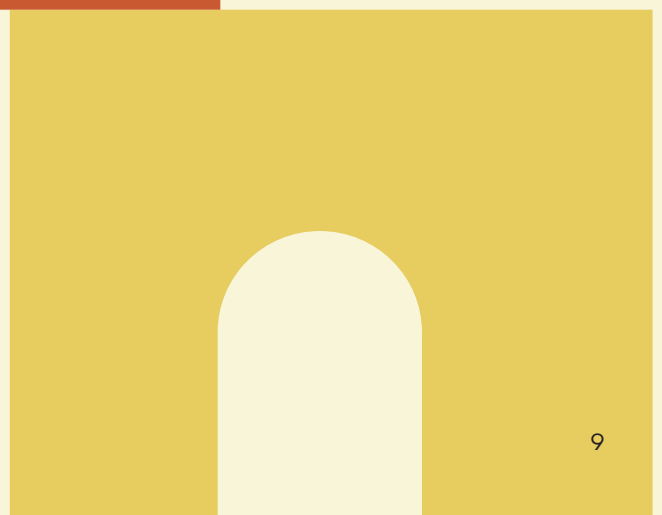
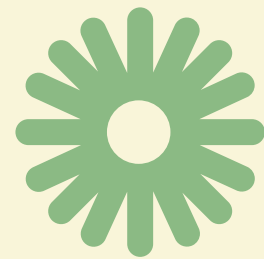
Term	Definition
Initial safety and risk assessment	A mandatory procedure conducted by the case manager/ child protection specialist upon receiving notification of child abuse or when a case of abuse is suspected. The information obtained is analyzed with the aim of assessing its severity and impact on the child's development and functioning and determining the need for police intervention to conduct an additional investigation or referring the case to the Family Care Authority.
Case Management	The process of helping individual children and families through direct social-work type support and information management.
Case Manager	A person who leads a dedicated case team to perform case management activities and oversee service provision to abused children and their families.
Treatment	The care provided to a child victim of abuse and his/her family (this includes medical care, psychological treatment and cognitive behavioral therapy)
Support	Services provided to abused children, their family and perpetrators in order to ensure their rehabilitation and reintegration in the community.
Alternative care	A type of care whereby a child lives with a family other than his/her biological family. This term includes custody and kinship care.
Foster care	Temporary care arranged for the benefit of the child for a limited period of time with the aim of protecting him/her from immediate danger.
Reintegration	Support and services provided to the child who has been abused or is at risk, his/her family and the perpetrator to allow them to return to normalcy.



● Policy Scope

The provisions of this Policy apply to all government and private entities and third sector institutions that provide services directly and indirectly to children in the Emirate, including the following:

- All children, citizens, residents, and visitors, regardless of their language, religion, where they were born, where they live, and with whom they live
- Staff in entities that provide services directly and indirectly to children
- Providers of services directly or indirectly to children
- Child protection specialists
- Staff in the child protection unit in relevant entities



● Policy Objectives

Based on the principle that child protection is a shared responsibility and recognizing that the effectiveness of the child protection system relies on active participation, collaboration, commitment, cooperation, accountability and effective coordination among relevant entities, this Policy covers mechanisms approved by the Emirate to protect children. It also delineates aspects of joint responsibility assigned to government entities, as well as private and third sector institutions, to maintain the safety of children. The aim is to ensure that all children in the Emirate are protected from harm and provided with the necessary resources for their development and well-being within a secure family environment that accommodates their needs and fosters their development and prosperity.

This Policy seeks to ensure that all children in the Emirate live in a stable and safe environment by:

- Empowering the child to exercise his/her rights, especially his/her right to protection and to expressing his/her opinion in all matters related to his/her life, as stipulated in the applicable legislations and international agreements ratified by the State.
- Establishing an evidence-based system that enables early detection of children and families at risk, vulnerable people and those suffering from abuse and allows for appropriate and effective intervention to respond and provide support to them on all levels including social, financial, health, educational and psychological levels.
- Strengthening partnerships related to child protection through coordination with relevant entities to ensure children's rights in the Emirate.
- Ensuring the implementation of child protection mechanisms and measures within relevant entities, in accordance with the legislations in the country and the international agreements ratified.
- Requiring all entities dealing with children to implement the Child Protection Policy, in order to keep children safe and protected within the society, by setting standards to protect children and prevent them from being subjected to abuse within Abu Dhabi. The Policy provides child-friendly reporting mechanisms that help them report abuse.

Policy Guiding Principles

The Policy is based on three guiding principles:

The best interest of the child

- Ensuring that the best interests of the child are prioritized in all procedures to safeguard his/her rights, development and protection within his/her natural family, as it is the primary and optimal environment to raise the child. The State guarantees the existence, preservation, protection and welfare of the family, in a way that achieves the child's rights and best interests and replaces it, when necessary, with an alternative family.
- Maximizing the participation of both the child and their family in the decision-making process concerning the child's welfare, in accordance with the applicable legislation and prevailing norms, and providing the necessary support for children with disabilities, children without parental care and/or receiving alternative care and children of unknown parentage or in need of financial support.
- Providing support to the family and caregivers, whenever possible, to ensure that they are able to provide a safe and stable environment for their children.

Equity and non-discrimination

- Ensuring the provision of comprehensive health, educational, social and recreational services to children with a commitment to non-discrimination based on age group, gender, nationality, race, language, religion and marital status. This includes children of determination and children without parental care and/or under alternative care, children of unknown parentage or in need of financial support.

Respecting the child's privacy and confidentiality of information

- Maintaining the privacy, confidentiality and safety of all children who have been subjected to abuse and all their medical or educational data, condition and social status, maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of those who report cases of child abuse and concealing their personalities and identities.



Section Two:

Policy Themes and Initiatives

This Policy is structured around six themes encompassing various initiatives that should be launched and implemented by the relevant entities in coordination with other entities within the child protection system in the Emirate. These themes consist of the following:

1

Launching effective preventive programs to raise awareness about child protection issues with the aim of promoting social behavioral change through the following initiatives:

Devising a well-coordinated action plan involving relevant entities, aimed at fostering communication, promoting public engagement and driving a shift in social behavior to enhance awareness about child protection. This plan guarantees the safety of children, parents, caregivers, professionals and all segments and members of society. It also educates them about their roles and responsibilities to create a safe environment for children within the Emirate.

Implementing outreach and awareness campaigns targeting children, parents, professionals, caregivers and the broader community, with a specific focus on:

- Children's rights and the importance of enforcing them to safeguard their well-being and empower them to protect themselves.
- The array of services and programs available to enhance the abilities of parents and caregivers in raising, nurturing and safeguarding children.
- General definitions of child abuse (diverse forms, negative consequences of different forms of abuse, risk factors and necessary responses).

Developing scalable preventive programs and proactive initiatives aimed at protecting children and safeguarding their well-being within their families, care institutions and the community. These programs and initiatives should be developed and implemented in collaboration with relevant entities and service providers, for example:

- "Dama Al-Aman" in schools and nurseries program.
- Programs for engaging parents and caregivers in child-care that are conducive to supporting children's growth and upbringing.

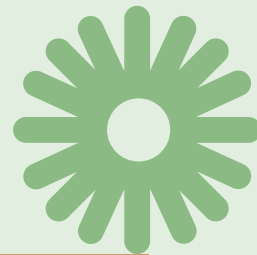


2

Creating unified and well-known reporting channels trusted by citizens and residents in the Emirate through the following initiatives:

Defining the roles and responsibilities of all relevant entities and outlining the required procedures and tools for efficiently reporting child abuse concerns, through the Child Protection Inter-Agency Case Management Manual.

Establishing a dedicated children's helpline, enabling children to confidentially express their concerns and access free, confidential assistance while providing protective services as required.



3

Enhancing early detection capabilities and delivering comprehensive, well-coordinated and high-quality care services through the following initiatives:

Developing intervention programs within the healthcare, education and social sectors, targeting early detection of families and children at risk and providing them with the necessary social support, mental health assistance and necessary treatment.

Improving the existing infrastructure and services within the child protection system by:

- Updating the current hotline communication channels and emergency services provided by all relevant entities to guarantee a prompt reaction to child abuse incidents.
- Fostering collaboration among the healthcare, education, social services and the law enforcement and judiciary sectors to establish central and immediate child protection services and manage cases involving high-risk children and families.

Providing a network of high-quality sheltering and alternative care solutions for children and families as needed, through the activation of the Children's House and the implementation of the case management model, while ensuring the availability of shelter/alternative care, offering social and mental health support services to children and their families and providing an experience aligned with the best practices for beneficiaries.



4

Implementing a case management model that relies on effective coordination among relevant entities across various sectors, along with clear mechanisms and well-defined responsibilities through the following initiatives:

Embracing an integrated approach built on multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary responses to manage child protection cases.

Developing and implementing standardized operating procedures and integrated protocols across relevant entities within the healthcare, education, social, law enforcement and judicial sectors. This includes adopting a streamlined method for detecting, referring, assessing and addressing child abuse concerns, as well as providing social services for child protection case management. It also includes the development and launch of the Child Protection Inter-Agency Case Management Manual and the creation of procedural guides for managing cases within each sector/entity.

Establishing KPIs, operational indicators, and quality assurance mechanisms to identify areas of improvement in child protection services. For instance:

- Developing performance indicators and methodologies for data management and monitoring to support evidence-based changes in service delivery protocols.
- Enforcing quality assurance mechanisms for service providers to ensure the availability of mandated service providers and reporters/licensed, qualified, certified, and accredited child protection specialists.
- Recording and monitoring satisfaction levels with services by children, families, and caregivers who receive services from relevant entities.



Developing a digital information management system for child protection and integrating electronic services related to child protection with all relevant entities to expedite the response to child protection concerns.

Activating the case management model by relevant entities, schools, nurseries, healthcare facilities, social/alternative care centers, and cultural/entertainment facilities that provide services to children. The implementation will follow the Child Protection Inter-Agency Case Management Manual, with careful consideration of the following:

- All children, families and caregivers benefiting from the child protection system in the Emirate shall be involved in the decision-making process.
- Relevant entities shall be committed to regularly seeking the opinions and preferences of children, their families, and caregivers, and taking them into consideration.
- Children, their families, and caregivers shall be regularly updated with developments regarding their case management.
- Throughout case management, children, their families, and caregivers shall be empowered to inquire or raise any concerns regarding case management. Moreover, cultural, religious, and ethnic differences of all children, their families, and caregivers shall be respected.



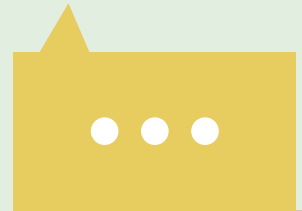
5

Developing child protection policies and relevant research through the following initiatives:

Reviewing and updating the legislations in force to support comprehensive child-centric and family-oriented protection procedures that prioritize the child's best interests.

Enforcing child rights and implementing preventive measures, family responsibilities, investigation protocols and appropriate legal action for alleged offenders.

Conducting research on child safety and protection to develop evidence-based interventions and policies aimed at improving prevention and service delivery.



6

Continuous education and development to train and upskill competencies through the following initiatives:

Implementing accredited training and professional development programs aimed at certifying all personnel involved in the child protection system. These programs are designed to equip the personnel with the necessary skills to provide professional services to children and families, as well as the skills for early detection of abuse, in addition to familiarizing them with reporting mechanisms and procedures and directing them to the appropriate channels for reporting.

Developing and implementing a strategy for attracting and retaining the human resources that contribute to the child protection system.





Section Three:

1 General Responsibilities

The child protection system includes multiple sectors, comprising policy makers, relevant entities, service providers, professionals and community members working together to protect children and support families in caring for children.

Since child protection is everyone's responsibility, every person who works with children and their families has a role to play. Therefore, in order to effectively assume this role, every person working with children must make sure that his/her actions and approach are child-centered, and that primary consideration is given to the child's best interest at all times.

To ensure the integration of roles and the effectiveness of the child protection system in Abu Dhabi, each entity shall assume the roles stipulated in the federal law and its executive regulations, in accordance with the legislation in force and the competence of each entity. Additionally, each entity shall develop its own policies and procedures to oversee child abuse cases, according to the requirements of each sector.

2 Governance Levels in the Child Protection System

Governance levels have been established to enable seamless coordination, oversight and accountability across the system. These levels are as follows:

1 Family and Child Protection Committee

The Department of Community Development is responsible for managing the Family and Child Protection Committee. This Committee consists of a group of representatives from the main authorities within the child protection system. Its responsibilities include reviewing the family and child protection system as a whole, identifying potential levers to improve the effectiveness, quality and efficiency of the system and providing suggestions to improve coordination between the various relevant entities, especially when handling complex and high-risk cases that require coordinated –simultaneous or sequential– actions between several entities.

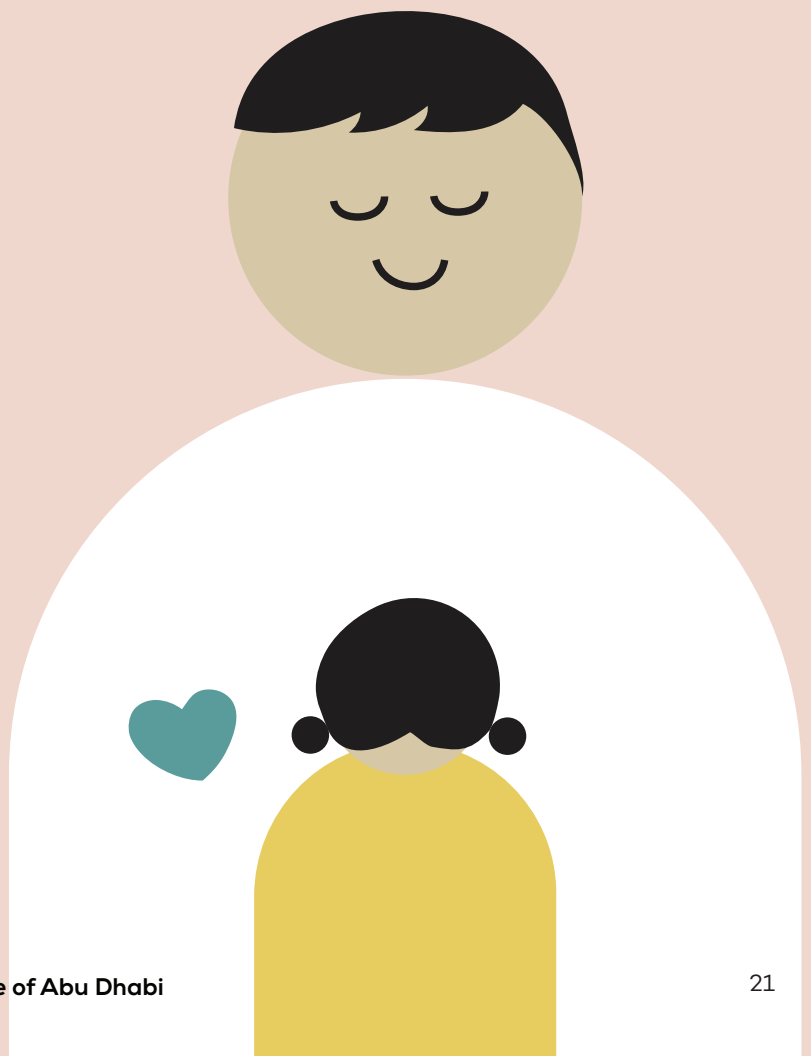
2 Child Protection Units

According to the federal law, each relevant entity, be it governmental, operational entity or otherwise, such as schools and hospitals, concerned with providing services to and dealing with children, is required to establish a child protection unit.

Child protection units are responsible for receiving and assessing concerns related to child abuse, as well as implementing child protection mechanisms and measures stipulated in the referenced law, in addition to relevant regulations and decisions issued. One or more child protection specialists are usually appointed to each unit.

3 Child Protection Specialist

Child protection specialists working in child protection units shall obtain a certificate from the relevant entity, after passing the accredited training program.



4

Mandated Reporters

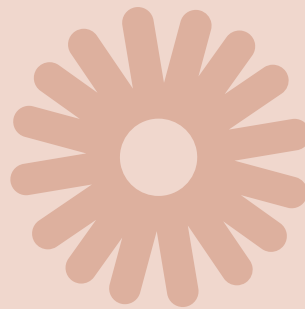
Reporting child abuse is mandatory for caregivers, doctors, social workers and other professionals entrusted with the protection, care or education of children. These individuals are, by law, required to report any concerns regarding the safety or health of a child. They are commonly referred to as 'Mandated Reporters.' Mandated Reporters encompass professionals who work directly with or may come into contact with children as part of their job, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Teachers, employees and administrative staff in schools, nurseries and childcare centers.
2. Workers and child caregivers in family care, foster care, alternative care and juvenile centers, etc.
3. Employees in sports and recreational clubs and camps.
4. Domestic helpers who look after children.
5. Workers in the fields of communications, internet services and photography who come across material related to children.
6. Any other person who works directly with children or is likely to come into contact with children, as part of their work.

3 Reporting Cases

1 Reporting Mechanisms:

Once information about a child at risk is entered into the Child Protection Information Management System, relevant entities must take a series of measures and actions, each within their area of expertise, to ensure the safety and health of the child in the short, medium and long term.



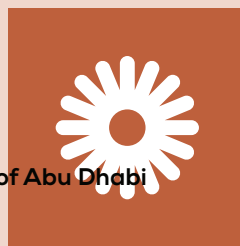
2 Reporting Channels

Every adult should provide assistance to any child who requests their help in reporting either their own suffering or the suffering of their siblings or any other child to the relevant entities. Entities can only play a role in safeguarding children when they are informed of a child being in danger.

Anyone who suspects that a child may have experienced abuse or is in danger of being abused should report their concerns to one of the following relevant entities through their official communication channels:



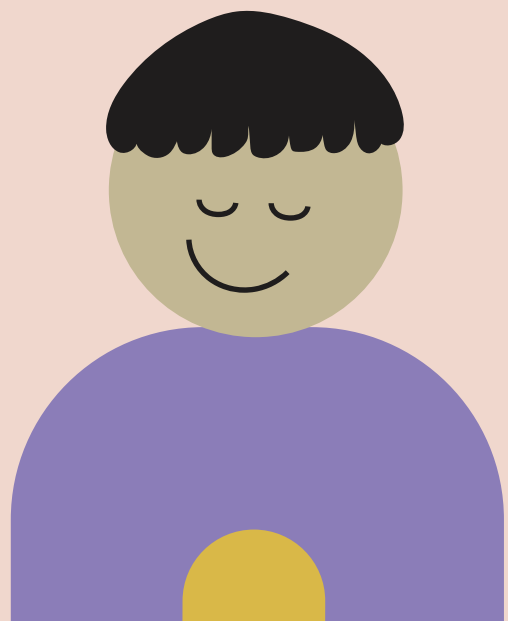
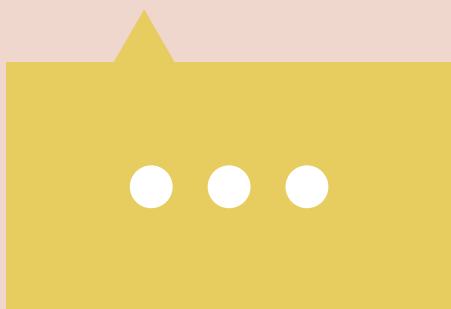
- Calling 999 for emergencies
- Child Protection Hotline on the following number: 116111
- Family Care Authority Hotline on the following number: 800444 or by email: icm@adfca.gov.ae
- Abu Dhabi Center for Sheltering and Humanitarian Care – Ewaa hotline on the following number: 8007283
- HEMAYATI App
- Website: <https://www.moi-cpc.ae/ar/Report.Abuse.aspx>
- Any other channels and tools provided by the relevant entities in the Emirate



4 Reporting Control Measures

All relevant entities are required to adhere to the following control measures:

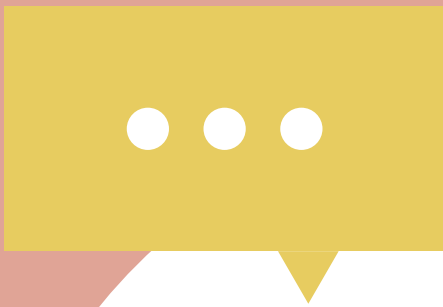
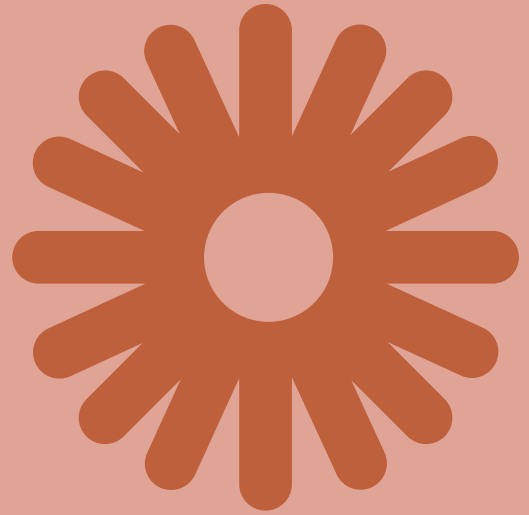
- Reporting of any suspected or proven case of child abuse occurring in any location within the Emirate.
- Taking the necessary measures to prevent and protect children from any potential forms of child abuse they might encounter.
- Not disclosing the reporter's identity without their consent and the disclosure of the identities of all parties involved and witnesses or discussing any ongoing or closed cases with internal parties (employees in the relevant entities) or unauthorized external parties, except for investigative and judicial entities.
- Facilitating the work of child protection specialists and cooperating with them without obstruction that may result in delays in taking necessary actions for reported cases or for case follow-up.
- Cooperating with support teams operating within their respective area of expertise and streamlining their tasks within relevant entities, preventing any obstruction that may result in delays in taking necessary actions for reported cases or for case follow-up.



4 Roles and Responsibilities

The relevant entities, each within their area of expertise, are tasked with executing this Policy in conjunction with one another and with any other relevant entities. The following table illustrates the roles and responsibilities of the primary entities within the child protection system:

Entities / roles and responsibilities	Regulations and policies development	Data collection and monitoring	Activation of the child protection unit / team	Prevention programs	Case referral	Case management	Case conference / intervention plan	Shelter services	Social, health, and psychological support services	Investigation and prosecution
Department of Community Development	X	X	X	X			X	X		
Family Care Authority	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Abu Dhabi Center for Sheltering and Humanitarian Care – Ewaa	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination	X	X	X	X	XXX		X		X	
Abu Dhabi Social Support Authority	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	
Authority of Social Contribution – Ma'an	X	X		X			X		X	
Family Development Foundation	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	
Department of Education and Knowledge	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	
Department of Health	X	X	X	X	XXX		X		X	
Abu Dhabi Public Health Centre	X	X	X	X	XXX		X		X	
National Rehabilitation Center	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	
Judicial Department	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Abu Dhabi Police GHQ	X	X	X	X	XXX		X	X	X	X
Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority	X	X		X	X		X			



Section Four:

Implementation
Follow-up and Policy
Evaluation

● **Implementation Follow-up and Policy Evaluation**

The Department of Community Development, in collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority and the Family and Child Protection Committee, will monitor the implementation and periodic review of this Policy to ensure the effectiveness of the measures and practices pertaining to the child protection system. This involves the following measures:



- Monitoring the Policy's implementation by relevant entities within the child protection system.
- Preparing an evaluation study to assess the extent to which the Policy is being applied and its impact on children, families and the community.
- Periodic and ongoing policy review and enhancement (every two years) and setting future directions and recommendations for improvement.



1 Operational Indicators

A set of key operational indicators has been identified to monitor policy implementation, with an emphasis on the necessity of developing an intersectoral operational plan for each entity to track these indicators and specify each indicator, as needed, to provide the necessary reports for monitoring policy implementation and measuring its impact as follows:

Awareness and prevention

Indicator	Rationale	Data Evaluation	Data Source
Number of individuals reached through awareness and prevention initiatives	Measuring the direct/ indirect impact of launched initiatives (such as campaigns)	p.a.	All relevant child protection entities
Percentage of schools that adopted Dama Al-Aman in Schools and Nurseries/ Safe School policies and initiatives	Following the progress in Dama Al-Aman in Schools and Nurseries/ Safe School policies	p.a.	Ministry of Education Emirates Schools Establishment Department of Education and Knowledge
Percentage of schools that implemented programs and activities supporting drug prevention measures	Measuring the extent of the spread of drug prevention programs and activities in schools	p.a.	Ministry of Education Emirates Schools Establishment Department of Education and Knowledge
Percentage of schools that have implemented programs and activities supporting mental health awareness measures	Measuring the extent of the spread of mental health support programs and activities in schools	p.a.	Ministry of Education Emirates Schools Establishment Department of Education and Knowledge

- **Case management (including child abuse case detection, referral, and processing)**

Indicator	Rationale	Data Evaluation	Data Source
Distribution of cases across different reporting channels	Monitoring the success of well-known and reliable reporting channels by Abu Dhabi citizens and residents	p.a.	Child Protection Information Management System
Number of reported child abuse cases by type of abuse	Monitoring the prevalence of child abuse cases in Abu Dhabi	p.a.	Child Protection Information Management System
Number of activated child protection units	Tracking the progress of the child protection system's effectiveness	p.a.	Child protection partners
Number of affected children registered in psychological therapy/social support programs (education, legal services, financial support, etc.)	Evaluating the services provided to abused children and their reintegration into their families/communities	p.a.	Child Protection Information Management System
Children, families, and caregivers' satisfaction rate with services provided by competent authorities	Identifying areas for improvement in the available child protection services	p.a.	Child Protection Information Management System
Number of offenders/perpetrators of child abuse who have been arrested/prosecuted	Monitoring the prevalence of child abuse cases in Abu Dhabi	p.a.	Child Protection Information Management System
Number of offenders/perpetrators of child abuse registered in therapy/support programs	Evaluating the services provided to offenders and their reintegration into the community	p.a.	Child Protection Information Management System
Impact of therapy/support programs on offenders	Evaluating the effectiveness of services provided to offenders and their reintegration into the community	p.a.	Child protection partners

- **Workforce and skill development in child protection**

Indicator	Rationale	Data Evaluation	Data Source
Number of employees dedicated to child protection in Abu Dhabi by institution in each sector (social, health, educational, etc.)	Tracking the progress of the child protection system's effectiveness	p.a.	Child protection partners
Number of planned training courses on child protection topics	Assessing efforts to improve the skills and build the capacities of the child protection workforce	p.a.	Child protection partners
Measuring the impact of training programs on stakeholders	Assessing the efforts' effectiveness in improving the skills and building the capacities of the child protection workforce	p.a.	Child protection partners

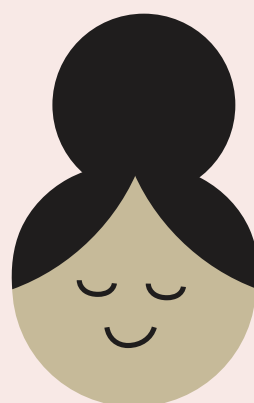
2 Data Collection Sources

Self-reporting tools: Surveys and self-assessment forms completed by relevant stakeholders

Assessment frameworks: Recurrent assessment processes carried out by strategic partners (such as the Emirates Schools Establishment and the Ministry of Education)

Systems/records of relevant entities: Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) and case management through strategic partners

Data of each entity: Manual and electronic databases maintained by implementing partners, government entities, private entities, third-sector institutions and other relevant entities



3 Strategic Partners

Education sector:

- Ministry of Education
- Department of Education and Knowledge
- Emirates Schools Establishment

Health sector:

- Department of Health
- Sheikh Khalifa Medical City
- National Rehabilitation Center
- Abu Dhabi Public Health Center
- Abu Dhabi Health Services Company
- Mubadala Health

Social sector:

- Department of Community Development
- Family Care Authority
- Abu Dhabi Social Support Authority
- Family Development Foundation
- Authority of Social Contribution – Ma'an
- Abu Dhabi Center for Sheltering and Humanitarian Care – Ewaa
- Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination
- Abu Dhabi Sports Council

Judicial sector:

- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Interior
- Abu Dhabi Judicial Department
- Abu Dhabi Police GHQ

