

Policies and Procedures to Protect Children From Abuse

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1. PURPOSE, SCOPE OF THE POLICY

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of the Policy is to indicate the rules and procedures for the protection of children from abuse in force at INVICTA Group Companies to ensure the child's welfare and best interests. Every INVICTA Employee shall treat the child with respect and take into account their needs.

The policy is designed to support Employees in fulfilling their legal and social obligation to respond in a situation of suspected child abuse.

1.2. Scope

The policy applies to the activities of the entire INVICTA GROUP, and in particular to the Clinics and sample collection points. It also regulates the activities of the HR Department to ensure the safe recruitment of employees and associates, having contact with children in their work.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORIZATIONS

1. All INVICTA Employees are obliged to implement the rules indicated in the Manual.
2. The Department Manager/Department Coordinator/Laboratory Manager shall be responsible for overseeing compliance with the Manual at the Department/Laboratory and for receiving a report of child abuse and carrying out the intervention.
3. The INVICTA Management Board shall be responsible for:
 - introduction of the Manual and necessary changes and announcement of the new version of the Manual to INVICTA Employees,
 - designation of the person responsible for the INVICTA Child Protection Policy.
4. The Management Board designates the Chief Operating Officer as the person responsible for the implementation of the INVICTA Child Protection Policy. The Chief Operating Officer shall cooperate with the Head of the Management Board Office.
5. Person in charge of child protection issues:
 - shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Policy, responding to signals of violations of the Policy and maintaining a register of reports, and for proposing changes to the Policy,
 - shall accept proposals from INVICTA Employees to amend the Policy,
 - shall review the Policy once every 12 months and update as necessary or based on proposals made,
 - once every 12 months, shall prepare a report on monitoring the implementation of the Policy, which shall then be submitted to the INVICTA Management Board.

3. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The definitions and terminology indicated below apply to the process:

1. **Child** – any person under the age of 18.
2. **Child's personal data** shall mean any information that allows the child to be identified.

3. **Harming a Child** - committing a prohibited act or punishable act to the detriment of a child, violence against a child or endangering the welfare of a child, including neglect. The source of harm to the child may be the behaviour of a person who is an Employee, the behaviour of the child's parents or legal guardians or other immediate family member, as well as other children. Harming a Child can take many forms:
 - a crime committed against a child (e.g., sexual abuse, child abuse);
 - another form of harm that is not criminal (e.g., shouting, physical punishment, humiliation);
 - neglect of the child's basic needs (such as those related to nutrition, hygiene, or health).
4. **Employee** - any employee of INVICTA regardless of the form of employment, including an associate, intern, volunteer, or other person who, by virtue of their function or tasks, has (even potential) contact with children. Personnel are considered to be employees, associates, regardless of the basis of employment (including persons providing services under civil law contracts, volunteers, students, residents, interns, trainees), place of employment, positions held (physicians, nurses, other medical staff, psychologists, administrative staff, support staff, including cleaning and housekeeping and security).
5. **Child's Guardian** - a person authorized to represent the child, in particular, their parent or legal guardian, as well as a foster parent.
6. **Person responsible for the Policy for the Protection of Children from Abuse** - an employee designated by the INVICTA Management Board who supervises the implementation of the Policy for the Protection of Children from Abuse at INVICTA. The Management Board appoints the Chief Operating Officer in cooperation with the Head of the Management Board Office.

4. PROCEDURE

4.1. Principles for safe Recruitment of People Who Will Work with a Child Patient

1. During the recruitment process, the HR Department gets to know the candidate's data to best understand their qualifications, including the attitude to values shared by INVICTA, such as the protection of children's rights and respect for their dignity.
2. INVICTA ensures that the people it employs (including contract workers and volunteers/interns) are qualified to work with children and are safe for them. To check the above, including the hired person's attitude toward children and sharing values related to respect for them and respect for their rights, the HR Department may request data (including documents) on:
 - a) education,
 - b) professional qualifications,
 - c) candidate's previous employment record
3. The HR Department, if it deems it necessary, may ask the candidate for references from previous places of employment.
4. The HR Department shall collect the personal data of the candidate, including the data needed to check their data in the Sex Offender Registry.
5. The HR Department shall ask the candidate to submit a statement of no criminal record and of pending preliminary, judicial and disciplinary proceedings.

4.2. Principles of Protection of Personal Data and Image of Children

1. INVICTA ensures the highest standards of protection of children's personal data in accordance with applicable laws.
2. INVICTA, recognizing the child's right to privacy and protection of personal property, ensures the protection of the child's image.

3. The employee shall not be allowed to release the image of the child recorded in any form (photography, audio-video recording) to the public nor allow media representatives to capture the image of the child (filming, photographing, recording the child's voice) on the premises of INVICTA and without the written consent of the child's parent or legal guardian. In order to obtain the consent referred to above, the employee may contact the child's guardian and establish the procedure for obtaining consent. It is unacceptable to provide media representatives with contact information for the child's guardian - without the knowledge and consent of said guardian.
4. If the image of the child is only a part of a bigger whole, such as: a gathering, a public event, the consent of the parent or legal guardian to record the image of the child is not required.

4.3. Principles of Safe Contact Between Staff and the Child-Patient

1. In all actions taken towards the child-patient, INVICTA is guided by the child's welfare and best interests. Every interaction with a child should take into account the child's age, medical situation, cognitive abilities, and individual needs. These rules have been written to define the framework of the professional relationship with the child-patient and to indicate good practices, as well as behaviours that should not take place.
2. GOOD PRACTICES
 - A young patient has the right to have parents/guardians accompany them during treatment and medical services whenever they need them.
 - In contact with the child-patient and their parents or guardians, INVICTA employees shall maintain: kindness, empathy and respect, cultural sensitivity, non-judgmental attitude.
3. RIGHT TO INFORMATION (direct contact with the child-patient)
 - Before engaging with the young patient, each INVICTA Employee shall introduce themselves and inform the child who they are.
 - Communicating information to the child shall be done in an age-appropriate way, using simple language. The child shall be given information about what activities are being performed and what is or will be happening to them. The person providing the medical service shall continuously monitor whether the child understands the situation and the consequences of medical or therapeutic actions.
 - The person providing the medical service shall make sure that the child knows about the possibility of asking questions of staff members.
 - In communication with the child-patient, every INVICTA Employee shall maintain honesty, i.e. tell the truth and take into account the context (age, situation and developmental level of the child).
 - If necessary, alternative forms of communication are used with the child who needs it.
4. ENSURING YOUNG PATIENTS' AGENCY AND RIGHT TO CONSENT
 - Each INVICTA Employee shall address the child by name in the form preferred by the child.
 - The child is the subject of the activities of employees providing medical services. Conversations with the child's parents/guardians shall not be conducted as if the child was absent.

- As far as possible, non-medical issues shall be consulted with the child and the child shall be presented with options to choose from – in a situation where allowing the child to decide will not affect the quality of treatment.
- The INVICTA Employee shall respect the child's right to mood swings, change their mind, and the need to become accustomed to a new situation and place.
- Children over the age of 16 have the right, together with their parent or legal guardian, to consent or refuse to consent to the proposed treatment.

5. RESPECT FOR THE CHILD'S INTIMACY

- During the medical examination, the child's body shall be exposed in parts. During the examination, the child should be accompanied by a parent/guardian or other staff member.
- Physical contact with a child that is unrelated to the provision of a medical service may only take place with the child's consent and according to the child's need.

6. COOPERATION WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS

- The child and parents/guardians shall be informed about the rules of INVICTA with an emphasis on the importance of adhering to them to minimize discomfort for all patients.
- The parent shall be informed of the child's current medical situation.
- We cooperate with parents/guardians in the process of preparing and reassuring the child – we ask what the child likes, what they react negatively and positively to.

7. PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM ABUSE

- In a situation where an INVICTA Employee sees or suspects that a child is being harmed, they shall respond in accordance with the Procedure.
- In a situation where a parent/guardian or other staff member frightens a child, gives false information, belittles the child's needs and feelings, an INVICTA Employee shall react and remind them about the rules of communication with the child.
- If something in the child's or parent's/guardian's behaviour raises concern, another staff member, may be asked to be present during the examination/visit.

8. NEVER

- Ignore the presence of the child. Introduce yourself to the child and ask them how they want to be addressed.
- Violate the child's right to intimacy and privacy (e.g., hugging without consent). Do not disclose personal or sensitive data.
- Discuss the child's situation over their head, ignoring their presence. Ask for the child's opinion in a situation where a choice can be given. Clarify the child's doubts and answer their questions.
- Limit the parent's ability to stay with the child. Do not underestimate the fact that the parent knows the child, their needs and preferences the best.
- Frighten or blackmail the child into cooperating.

- Ignore or downplay your child's feelings, such as fear, pain anxiety, uncertainty about the new situation.
- Lie, such as claiming it won't hurt, when you know it can.
- Draw hasty conclusions about the child and family if they are not justified by professional knowledge and judgment.
- Assume that the child and their parents/guardians know how INVICTA operates and the binding rules.
- Allow child-patients and their parents/guardians to feel discriminated against or receive a lower standard of care.
- Yell, shame, humiliate, disrespect, or insult the child-patient or their parents/guardians.

4.4. Principles of Safe Contact Between Staff and the Child-Patient - VERSION FOR KIDS

1. You are here because you need our help. INVICTA Clinics are staffed by physicians, nurses, psychologists, technicians, and other specialists who are prepared to help all patients, including children.
2. Our work is guided by various principles, and not all of them apply only to treatment. The ones you are reading now are aimed at children. They will explain everything we will be doing to make you feel good when you're under our care.
 - You can tell us how we should address you.
 - You have the right to know the name of the person who treats you and what they do. If the person forgets to introduce themselves, you can ask their name.
 - If there's something you don't understand or don't know what your treatment is about, how the procedure or diagnostics will work, and you want to find out - go ahead and ask! We'll try to clarify things.
 - We'll treat you with respect. We won't tell you it doesn't hurt if it can hurt.
 - We want you to always feel that your health, needs, and feelings are important to us. If you wanted to tell us what you like or don't like about our behaviour - do it, we'll listen and pay attention.
 - We'll try to examine you gently and give you time to get used to the situation. However, sometimes this may not be possible if we need to provide this assistance quickly because of your health.
 - We'll ask your opinion on issues where we can give you a choice.
 - If something has happened that worries you, someone has hurt you or crossed your boundaries, you can tell a medical professional (e.g., physician, nurse, registrar) about it and ask for help. We'll do our best to ensure your safety. If there is anything you would like to talk about or report to us after your visit - let us know, we'll listen.

4.5. General Rules for Dealing with Suspected Child Abuse

1. Each Employee is obliged and authorized to respond, in case of suspicion that a child-patient is being harmed.
2. Medical professionals, as people properly trained to make medical diagnoses, play one of the most important roles in the process of recognizing child abuse.
3. Violation of the obligation to respond may be considered a serious breach of professional or contractual obligations and, as such, lead to termination of the contract with the violator.
4. The fact of identifying symptoms of abuse in a child-patient shall be subject to mandatory recording in the medical record. The documentation should include a detailed description of the child-patient's symptoms, injuries, general physical and emotional state, as well as information from the interview regarding the circumstances of the injury and the onset of symptoms and the reasons why the child came in for a medical consultation. The child's medical file should record exactly what information the child provided and was observed, noting who provided the information, when it was received and why it raises concerns about the child's safety. If traces of physical violence are observed, the description must include: the type of injuries found, possible causes and the time of their occurrence. The physician shall be required to complete a medical certificate on the causes and type of injuries related to domestic violence.

4.6. Procedures for Intervention in Cases of Suspected Child Abuse

1. If you suspect that a child's life is in danger or they are in danger of serious harm due to domestic violence, and there are or may be other children in the family, you should immediately inform the police by calling 112. Informing the services shall be done by the Employee who first became aware of the threat.
2. Any person who suspects child abuse shall report it to the Head or Coordinator of the Department/Laboratory.
3. The Head or Coordinator of the Department/Laboratory is responsible for conducting interventions.
4. Intervention in the case of a suspected crime committed against a child involves drawing up a written notification (Appendix 1), describing the event in the most detailed way, indicating the data of the victim (first and last name, address, PESEL) and the potential perpetrator (at least first and last name and other data that allow identification, such as relationship to the child - father, mother, place of residence or place of work or study), sending it to the nearest police unit or prosecutor's office. If a criminal act is committed against a child by a person under the age of 17, a written notice should also be prepared.
5. When a child suffers a form of harm other than a crime committed against them:
 - a) On the part of the Employee:**
 - i. In a situation where the behaviour was a one-time and low-intensity intrusion into the child's welfare, a disciplinary conversation should be held with the Employee or co-worker,
 - ii. When the violation of the child's welfare is significant (e.g., there has been discrimination or a violation of the child's dignity), it is necessary to recommend the termination of the legal relationship with the person who committed the abuse or with a third party where the person is employed or with which it cooperates.
 - iii. If child abuse was committed by the Branch/Laboratory Head or Coordinator then the person who noticed the abuse shall forward the information directly to the INVICTA Management Board at the following email address: biuro.zarzadu@invicta.pl. In this case, the HR Director shall be responsible for leading the intervention, to whom all the provisions concerning the head of a unit provided for in this procedure shall apply.
 - b) On the part of parents, legal guardians or other household members:**
 - i. Initiate the Blue Card procedure by filling out the Blue Card form - A (https://www.niebieskalinia.info/images/NK_A.pdf) when behaviour toward a child constitutes domestic violence. The Blue Card is handed over to the Police.
 - ii. When the behaviour does not constitute domestic violence - or when it is not clear how to qualify it - apply to the family court to look into the family's situation.

6. Where there has been neglect of the child's basic needs or other threats to the child's welfare:
 - a) **On part of the Employee** - conduct a disciplinary interview and, if necessary, apply disciplinary consequences, including termination of the legal relationship;
 - b) **On the part of the parents or legal guardians** - apply to the family court with jurisdiction over the child's place of residence to look into the child's situation.
7. In unclear or doubtful cases, the person in charge of the intervention shall consult at least two people from among the Employees, in particular a psychologist. The person in charge of the intervention may talk to those involved, including the child, the suspected abuser and witnesses.
8. If it is not clear what kind of harm the child is experiencing from the parent or legal guardian, the Blue Card procedure should be initiated.
9. Suspected child abuse, regardless of the person responsible for the abuse, is an adverse event and, as such, is subject to the procedure described in INV.W.WWW.08.PP.I.25 Dealing With Adverse Events Occurring During the Provision of Healthcare Services.
10. Further proceedings are at the discretion of the proper authorities (court, police, prosecutor's office, OPS (Social Aid Center)).

4.7. Procedures for intervention in case of suspected child abuse by an Employee

1. In case of suspected child abuse by an Employee, that person should be immediately removed from all forms of contact with children until the matter is clarified.
2. If criminal proceedings are launched against an Employee in connection with a crime against a child, that person must be absolutely and immediately removed from all forms of contact with children until the legal and binding conclusion of the proceedings.

5. FINAL PROVISIONS

1. The procedure is available at every Invicta Clinic and at the Sample Collection Centers.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Appendix 1 - Notice of Suspicion of a Crime - Template

Appendix 2 - Rules for Safe Contact Between Staff and a Child-Patient - VERSION FOR CHILDREN

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