

# The Community Childcare Worker

## Child Protection Handbook



Zimbabwe  
Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare  
(Department of Child Welfare and Protection Services)



National Action Plan for  
Orphans and Vulnerable Children





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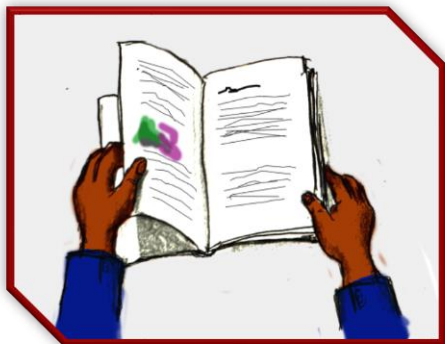
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## List of acronyms

<b>AGRITEX</b>	Agricultural Technical and Extension Services
<b>ART</b>	Antiretroviral Therapy
<b>CCW</b>	Community Childcare Worker
<b>CMO</b>	Case Management Officer
<b>CPC</b>	Child Protection Committee
<b>CWO</b>	Child Welfare Officer
<b>DCWPS</b>	Department of Child Welfare and Protection Services







## About the Handbook

This Handbook is a user-friendly tool meant to assist Community Childcare Workers (CCW) in promoting child protection and reducing the risk of child abuse at the community level. It provides case examples and illustrations to help CCWs handle

various types of abuses. The handbook is simplified and shows ways of handling different child protection cases.

## Aims of the handbook

The aim of this handbook is to assist the Community Childcare Workers (CCWs) to identify child protection cases within their communities and to reduce the risk of child abuse by increasing child protection through community awareness of child rights. The use of this handbook also ensures that work carried out by CCWs throughout Zimbabwe will be standardized.

## Objectives of the Handbook

The Handbook will assist Community Childcare Worker to:

- promote prevention of child abuse;
- improve understanding of what child protection is;
- increase capacity to prevent child abuse;
- develop skills to identify diverse child protection issues and refer cases accordingly.

## Action check list

It is expected that the Community Childcare Worker will follow through the below actions as they use this handbook:

- Write down all processes being undertaken to safeguard the child and their families
- Support the child to access services
- Use the right channels to inform other relevant stakeholders
- Promote child rights awareness
- Ensure the safety of the child and their family are considered.



### What to remember:

Below are important aspects every Community Childcare Worker has to remember:

- Focus is on child protection cases
- Always consider the best interests of the child
- Always maintain confidentiality/privacy
- Accurate recording of information being collected



## ...but, what is child protection?

Child protection (CP) is making sure that children are kept away from actions or situation that place their healthy development and well-being at risk. It also prevents and responds to violence, exploitation and abuse against children.

## What is the role of the Community Childcare Worker (CCW) in child protection?

- To identify cases and refer them to Child Welfare Officers.
- To share child-friendly information with the community
- To promote child rights by conducting child rights awareness campaigns.
- To accompany children/families/guardians to access services
- To facilitate access to services through continuous follow-up on cases
- To maintain up-to-date information of the child
- To be responsible for preventing and responding to physical, sexual or emotional abuse, sexual exploitation, child trafficking, child labour, abuse in the home, at school, in the community and harmful as well as harmful traditional practices such as genital mutilation and child marriages.

## REMEMBER:



The role of the CCW is not only to react to abuse but also to help prevent abuse. Be always alert to use every possible opportunity to raise awareness of your existence and role as a CCW to school children and communities. Take advantage of your community gatherings to raise awareness on protecting children. Also remember that your role is to assist children and parents and in doing so be cautious not to assume the role of the parents/guardians.

CCWs are part of the Local CPC and should work closely with the local Child Protection Committees (CPCs) whose roles include:

- Visiting households that are vulnerable to child protection abuses, such as children living on their own.
- Referring children to specialist services, such as victim-friendly units and child justice services as well as maintaining a monitoring role in ensuring required services are received.
- Checking uptake of services provided for children and reporting on any shortfalls that must be improved on in service provision.

## Types of child protection cases the CCW should look out for:

Below are the types of child protection cases you should be on the lookout for as you do your work:

- Sexually abused children
- Children who are physically abused
- Children reunified with their families to guard against stigma.
- Married children
- Pregnant children
- Abandoned children



*Example of a child earning a living by working in the street.*

## Other welfare cases affecting the well-being of children include:

- Children not adhering to antiretroviral treatment (ART)
- Children living in extreme poverty
- Child-headed families
- Children who have dropped out of school
- Children without birth certificates

## Cases needing urgent attention

### REMEMBER:



*All child abuse cases are treated with utmost urgency.*

There are cases which need urgent attention as they may be life threatening. As a CCW, you have to be able to identify such cases and act swiftly. For instance, promptly refer sexual abuse cases to ensure that the child receives Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP). Or any type of abuse which might result in the death of a child if no urgent action is taken must be reported urgently.

## CCW roles at each level

Cases can be grouped as emergencies and non-emergencies. In non-emergency cases, the life of the child is not endangered and includes issues like birth registration.

Emergency cases are those in which the life of the child is in danger and include all forms of child sexual abuse and exploitation. All emergency cases have to be documented, referred and/or reported within a 24-hour period to the Department of Child Welfare and Protection Services (DCWPS) or the police, whichever is faster or nearest.

All cases reported to other agencies like the police must be written down and reported to the DCWPS for purposes of follow up.

In the table below are two lists of emergency and non-emergency cases:

<b><i>Emergency cases (life &amp; health-threatening)</i></b>	<b><i>Non-emergency cases</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child marriages</li><li>• Sexual abuse</li><li>• Physical abuse</li><li>• Abandonment and severe neglect</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children out of school</li><li>• Birth registration</li><li>• Need for school fees</li><li>• Child participation issues</li></ul>

- Children living outside the family environment
- Emergency food need/severe malnutrition
- Emergency health care needs

- Need for School uniforms

It is important to note that the lists do not include all cases.

**NB:** Non-emergency cases have to be assessed as there may be other serious underlying issues taking place in the life of the child.

## Points to remember:

### Level of risks in child protection cases

The table on the following page highlights typical risk levels in child protection cases.

**IMMEDIATE**

Child is in life-threatening danger or likely to die / be seriously harmed unless urgent steps are taken.



**HIGH  
RISK**

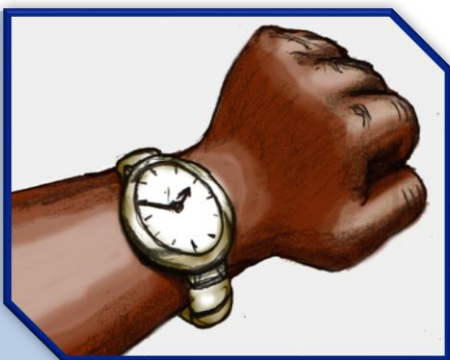
A child is suffering or is likely to suffer serious harm to the extent that their development and wellbeing is likely to be significantly affected.

**MEDIUM  
RISK**

A child is likely to or is suffering some degree of harm without an effective protective intervention plan.

**LOW  
RISK**

The child is not currently suffering harm, or if this is occurring its impact is minimal, although there are concerns that without appropriate care and support the child will suffer.



## Example of Risk Levels with Timeframes:

Within case management procedures, it is essential to identify how risk is measured and assessed and expectations in terms of time periods for action.

The table below illustrates risk levels and appropriate timeframes.

<b><i>Risk Level</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>	<b><i>Timeframe</i></b>
<b><i>High Risk</i></b>	Child needs urgent medical attention, is likely to be seriously harmed or injured, or subjected to immediate and ongoing sexual abuse, or be permanently disabled, trafficked or die if left in his/her present circumstances without protective intervention.	<b>Intervention should be done ideally before leaving the child. Report immediately to Supervisor</b>
<b><i>Medium Risk</i></b>	A child is likely to suffer some degree of harm without an effective protective intervention plan. Intervention is warranted. However, there is no evidence that the child is at risk of imminent serious injury or death.	<b>Intervention should be done within 72 hours</b>
<b><i>Low Risk</i></b>	The home is safe for children. However, there are concerns about the potential for a child to be at risk if services are not provided to prevent the need for protective intervention.	<b>Intervention should be done within 1 week</b>

# Communicating with children

Children are not little adults. Communicating with them therefore needs you to get down to their level and try to understand them from there. In most cases, children are not free to open up about what is really troubling them, but they can show this through:

- Play
- Non-verbal communication
- Verbal Communication (rarely does this clearly come out.



The following must be remembered when communicating with children:



- Assure the child that whatever they will tell you will be kept confidential.
- Never laugh at nor humiliate a child who needs your assistance.
- Always create an enabling and friendly environment for the child to open up to you.
- Show the child that you are free and willing to listen to their story.
- Never be angry at nor judge the child.
- Respect the child's views.
- Do not argue with the child.
- Do not cry when a child is narrating their story, as this might compromise your efforts in helping the child.

## **Effective communication with children therefore entails:**

- Listening carefully to what the child is saying, and showing them that you are paying attention and taking them seriously.
- Encouraging the child to continue talking.
- Speaking politely with the child.
- Always speaking in the language which the child is familiar with.

For sexual abuse cases, children are not usually free to talk to a CCW of the same sex as the perpetrator, as this causes them to re-live the abuse.

It is therefore advisable that in the case of a male abuser, male CCWs should notify their female counterparts so that they take up the case with the Department of Child Welfare and Protection Services.

The same is also true for female CCWs who encounter cases of child victims whereby the perpetrator was female; they should alert a male CCW to assist the child.

# Forms of abuse and exploitation

(As a CCW always be on the lookout for these:)



1. **Rape:** This is forced sexual intercourse with a child. Even when the child is said to have agreed to the sexual act, it is still criminal for an adult to have sex with a child and such cases need to be reported urgently.

2. **Sexual abuse:** This involves touching and fondling a child's private parts, exposing a child to pornographic material and nudity. Most children do not easily recognise that they are being sexually abused. You need to always check for signs like increased sexual awareness in children.

## Signs of the above abuses include:

- Difficulty in walking, Chronic itching, pain, discharge, bleeding from genitals, mouth or anus, STIs,
- Lack of trust or fear of someone they know
- Persistent sadness and depression
- Unusual mature behaviour inconsistent with age
- Excessive interest in children/people of the opposite sex
- Possession of gifts whose origin is not properly explained
- Pregnancy
- Lack of concentration at school
- Loss of interest in age related activities

3. **Physical abuse:** Hitting, pinching and assaulting a child. This usually results in bodily injury to the child. It is easier to notice as the signs like bruises, cuts and burns are in most cases visible, bite and cigarette burn marks, Signs of severe, long-term bruising especially to face, swollen limbs, swollen eyes, unexplained physical injuries



4. **Emotional abuse:** Closely tied to **verbal abuse**, it involves insulting a child, calling them names and degrading them so that they feel worthless. Bullying in schools also amount to emotional abuse. It is a very common type of abuse but is usually very difficult to tell, so you need to pay attention to things like the way in which the child relates to others. In most cases emotionally abused children tend to be withdrawn and have difficulties making friends with others.



*The effects of bullying can be devastating to a child's self-esteem and social interaction skills. Sometimes the lack of support from parents and community leaders worsens the problem.*

### Other signs of emotional abuse include:

- Slow physical, intellectual/emotional development
- Learning problems or sudden speech disorders
- Difficulties in forming relationships, withdrawn, Disruptive, attention seeking behaviour, Insecure

5. **Neglect:** Leaving a child without proper care and support in terms of food, clothing, shelter and the support of a family environment.

### Signs of neglect include:

- Frequently hungry, stealing, or hiding food, losing weight
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Frequently missing school, poor clothing or dresses inappropriately for age
- Physical signs of malnutrition

**Case Scenario 1:** Nosisa's mother died of a heart attack when Nosisa was 11, she is now 13 but since the death of her mum; her father has been severely depressed and decided to avoid relatives. The child lives with her father in a 1 roomed cottage in Mpopoma.



What to do:

1. Collect names and address details of the child, such details may also include the name of the school where the child goes to
2. Document all details on the case log sheet
3. Notify the DCWPS within 24hrs of contact with case.



6. **Economic exploitation:** An example will be where an adult makes a child engage in paid work, but the benefits/profit from that work go to that adult for his/her own gain.

**Case scenario 2: Child exploitation**

17-year old Musandaso was raised by his mother and stepfather. After passing his O levels, his mother and stepfather got him a job and released him to rent a room in the community. Even though Musandaso works as a clerk at a nearby school, he is already driving a flashy BMW and there are two middle-aged men who frequent his home during the night and on weekends. It is rumoured that Musandaso is working with these men and circulating drugs on their behalf.



7. **Sexual exploitation:** This is where one forces a child to engage in prostitution and pornography in order for him/her to gain from such transactions

### Case scenario 3: Child sexual abuse

Tarisai Zezai a Form 2 pupil at Mbare High school; is in a love relationship with Maxwell a 20 year old University student. The Zezai family is excited that their daughter is loved by a well to do young man and allow her to sleep over at Maxwell's rented room in Mt Pleasant.



#### What to do:

1. Collect full names and addresses of all people involved in the case
2. Notify the police and the DCWPS.
3. Wait for further instructions from the DCWPS.
4. There is a possibility that the Zezai family have no understanding of child protection, connect them to a family club and raise awareness in your community regarding the existence of family clubs

8. **Child Labour:** Causing a child to work at a time when they are supposed to be in school. It involves giving a child work that is not proportionate to their development.



*Giving a child work that is not proportionate to their age and strength is harmful to their health and development*

9. **Child Trafficking:** The trade of children, most commonly for the purpose of sexual slavery, forced labour or commercial sexual exploitation. You need to be on the lookout for children who are illegally transported to other countries. Report any suspected case of child trafficking immediately to the nearest police station, so that the children are saved and perpetrators apprehended before they cross the country's borders, after which it can be difficult to trace them.

*Sometimes children are trafficked abroad under very illegal and unpleasant conditions.*



## REMEMBER:



All cases of child abuse and exploitation need to be reported immediately to the Department of Child Welfare and Protection Services and the nearest police who will take over the investigations.

# What is Case Management?

**Case management** is a way of working better with children so that they get all the services they need in at the right time from the right people or organizations.

As CCW you are an important person in case management as you are responsible for the identification of children in need of protection services. If this is not managed well many cases of child abuse will go unnoticed and unreported leaving many children in need of life saving services. It should be noted that most cases of child abuse are difficult to establish at face value. This is one of the reasons why such cases have gone unreported for years. Once a child in need of protection services has been identified you are responsible for referring the child to proper service providers through using the correct ways you have been taught. Also make sure you are working closely with the child's family.

Once a child protection issue has been identified and referred to service providers, you need to make follow-ups with the family and service providers to find out if the child and their family have received the necessary services.

## Case identification

Some of the ways to identify children experiencing or vulnerable to risk are given below:

- As a CCW you can identify cases by making use of village registers or through observation of negative changes in a child's behaviour, physical bodily marks, poor health or clothing.
- Children may be identified and brought to your attention by community outreach workers, state and non-state actors during routine interactions with the community.
- A child may be registered as needing support following recovery from exploitative situations such as child prostitution and drug gangs.
- A child may be referred by other community members and professionals as teachers, nurses, AGRITEX workers.
- Referrals may have been made through CPCs, churches, employers and the community at large
- Children may also make themselves known to the CCW or other protection agencies.

## Referring Children

For you to refer cases accordingly, you need to first know what are the problems facing the child, as well as what they need. When you refer a child to a service provider, make sure you record this in the case log sheet.

## Points to remember

- Always record meetings with children and their families in the case log sheet
- Make use of your diary to record important contact details, names, dates and events
- Make follow-ups at least once fortnightly.
- Your diary and log sheet are confidential documents, they should never be shared with anyone except those with something to do with the child's case, and are likely to contribute to the problem-solving process.



## Important working principles for the CCW

The following are the principles that should guide you in your work as a CCW:

1. **Do no harm:** Everything you do must not expose the child to further risk or harm.
2. **Prioritise the best interest of the child:** What is good for the child should always come first.
3. **Ensure accountability:** Always be prepared to take responsibility for your actions.

4. **Respect confidentiality:**

All information you get about the child and their family must be kept as a secret, and must not be shared with anyone who does not have anything to do with the case nor has any authority to handle it.



5. **Do not be discriminatory:** Treat all children you work with equally, without favour based on ethnicity, skin colour, tribal group, gender or their social background.

6. **Provide culturally appropriate responses:**

Always take into consideration the cultural and religious context of the child when working with them. Report to your District Child Welfare Officer through your Lead Community Childcare Worker wherever you suspect cultural or religious practices of a particular group conflict with children's rights.



7. **Seek informed consent:** Always seek the informed consent of the family and/or the assent of the child whenever you want to visit the family. In cases where the family is hostile and there is suspected child abuse, notify the authorities so that they investigate quickly.
8. **Maintain working boundaries and always avoid conflict of interest:** Never abuse your position as a Community Childcare Worker to violate children and their families. In cases where you feel your role as a CCW may be compromised due to your relationship with the child or family involved, hand over the case to another CCW.

## Do's and Don'ts for Community Childcare Workers

### REMEMBER:



1. Always uphold in utmost confidence all information related to cases of children that you handle.
2. Respect the physical integrity of all children and never hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse children.
3. Report any suspected case of violence, abuse or exploitation of a child by anyone without fear or favour.
4. Never engage in sexual relations with children under the age of 18, including children who may be exploited in the commercial sex industry.



5. Never directly or indirectly exploit children or place them in situations which would leave them vulnerable to any form of exploitation.
6. Do not employ children at home as domestic workers who are under 18.

## CCWs and Family Club meetings



### Community Mobilisation

- With support from the Child Welfare Officer (CWO) and Case Management Officer (CMO), explain the Family Clubs idea to parents/caregivers for their buy-in.
- Help willing groups of parents/caregivers to come together and form Family Clubs. You advise the club on how to plan its meetings, number of meetings held per month, venue selection and safe keeping of the Family Clubs toolkit. Note that the

maximum number of participants in one Family Club should not exceed 20.

- Explain to parents/caregivers that Family Clubs contribute to the well-being of children, and that members should feel free to highlight child protection concerns from their communities during the discussions.

## **1. Family Clubs Supervision**

The following are your roles in supporting family clubs:

- At the time of the formation of the family club, help the group members to facilitate the first two topics including writing down of group activities.
- Support the members so they can hold future sessions on their own.
- Sometimes group members may feel that they need a professional such as a nurse, police officer, etc. to come and speak to them on a particular topic. Help the group to get this person to come and talk to them.
- Keep monitoring group performance by checking attendance register and minutes.

## **2. Case Identification and Management**

Some child protection cases can come out during the family club discussions. As a CCW you must:

- Refer all child protection cases to the Department of Child Welfare and Protection Services.
- Give feedback to the group on cases referred through the family club.

## Challenges you may encounter in your work

During the course of your work, you may encounter the following challenges. It is important to prepare yourself for them, and know how to deal with them:

- 1. You are called to be a witness in a case of abuse and your life is in danger or you receive threats.**



## What to do:

- Immediately report to the police such threats and interference with you as a witness.
- Also avoid moving about on your own especially when there are threats to your life.
- It is always advisable to refer sensitive abuse cases from your area to a CCW from another area or village, to minimize the risk of victimization by the abuser or their family members.



## **2. A family is protective of the abuser and threatens your life.**

### **What to do:**

- Do not confront the family. Report the abuse and threats to your local police. Also inform your local community leader of the threats.
- Notify the DCWPS about the case following the laid down manner of reporting. The DCWPS and the police will do the investigations.

### **REMEMBER:**



Your role as CCW is to notify the Department of Child Welfare and Protection Services of any suspected abuse, and not to investigate such cases.

## **3. An alleged abuser is reported and for some reason no action is taken against them and the community begins to lose trust in you.**

### **What to do:**

- Follow up with the police and DCWPS, and give feedback to your local CPC on the status of the case.

## REMEMBER:



Always be cautious not to make promises that raise false hopes like 'I will make sure that the abuser is imprisoned' to the child, their family or community as these are not within your control.

### **4. A family feels you are interfering with their domestic affairs and are unwilling to be helped. They even deny you entry**

#### **What to do:**

- Introduce yourself in a polite manner, and clearly explain the objectives of your visit and your role as a Community Childcare Worker.
- If family insists they don't want your assistance, do not force nor threaten them, but rather refer the case to your Lead Childcare Worker.
- Remain guided by your role expectation that you are there to safeguard children and go ahead with reporting the case following the prescribed procedure in your work.



## Self-care

Because of the nature of the cases you receive, you are likely to get tired, and this tends to draw most of your energy. Sometimes you get frustrated because the cases are not moving at the pace you expect. Below are some of the strategies you may use to help yourself:

### Burnout recovery strategy

- **Slow down:** You need to force yourself to slow down or take a break. Cut back whatever commitments and activities you can. Give yourself time to rest, reflect, and heal.
- **Get support:** Involve the LCCW especially during peer supervision sessions and discuss work issues and challenges, so attend all meetings and remember you are working in a team.
- **Re-evaluate your goals and priorities:** Check if you are giving your family enough time and attention as well as your work commitments.
- **Speak up:** Talk about your concerns or thoughts about how to improve a situation, express them to colleagues



- **Accept assistance.** Don't be shy to accept help from others even on simple case tasks.

## Important points to remember in handling different case scenarios:

- ✓ You are a recognized member of the child protection team which consists of other CCWs, CPC, Community/Local leaders, DCWPS & other service providers.
- ✓ Keep contact details of DCWPS, the Police and other service providers in your diary.
- ✓ Record in your diary any challenges faced and potential threats to child safety as you assist children in your work.
- ✓ Record all case related contacts and meetings in the case log sheet.
- ✓ All information is strictly confidential.
- ✓ Report any abuse or potential abuse case immediately.
- ✓ The task of investigating cases belongs to the DCWPS and the Police, however they may require some assistance, kindly furnish them with all information required.
- ✓ DCWPS officers are on duty 24hrs - calling them at night is not bothering them.







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Department of Children's and Family Development



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