Creating a Safeguarding Policy: The Essentials

Presented by

PRAESIDIUM

In partnership with FADICA

1

What can I find on the website?

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A FADICA INITIATIVE

safeguarding.fadica.org

Checklists, Templates, and Policy Models
Find inspiration for building out your organization's written policies and best practices.

Custom Webinar Recordings
Explore the archive of recently recorded safeguarding webinars, curated with direct-service/nonprofits in mind.

Collaborative Consulting Opportunities
Schedule a discovery call with FADICA and Praesidium to help discern next steps in your safeguarding journey.

2

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding refers to measures and interventions that protect people from abuse, harm, exploitation, or violence.

Safeguarding reflects a commitment to best practices that prevent abuse, reduce risk, and keep all persons— especially children and vulnerable adults—safe.

Safeguarding also promotes action that assures justice and supports healing for victims and survivors of abuse.

You may be more familiar with terms like safe environment, risk management, or abuse prevention —all important aspects of safeguarding.

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Organizational safeguarding includes having a written safeguarding policy, Code of Conduct, and supporting guidance in place as part of "best practices."

A written safeguarding policy should guide you in answering the question: **What do we need to do to keep people safe at our organization?**

Guidance and program expectations should be shared with **all stakeholders**, including staff, volunteers, Board members, program participants, and beneficiaries of service.

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4

ABOUT

PRAESIDIUM

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Our mission is to help you protect those in your care from abuse and to help preserve trust in your organization.

Praesidium is a **leading innovator** of scientifically-based solutions designed to transform the way organizations approach the prevention of sexual abuse. For **over 30 years**, Praesidium's expertise, consulting, and solutions have helped **foster safer environments** for children, vulnerable adults, staff, volunteers, and all parties involved.

5

- Infants, children, and youth
- Elderly or geriatric
- Intellectual or developmental disabilities
- Physical disabilities
- Mental health challenges
- Unhoused or experiencing homelessness
- Formerly incarcerated
- Undocumented immigrants
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Survivors of trafficking
- Substance use addiction or recovery
- Healthcare patients

"Vulnerable Populations"

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6

Types of Abuse

Physical

Sexual

Verbal/Emotional

Mental/Psychological

Exploitation

Neglect

Financial/Economic

Spiritual

Cultural/Identity

7

Important Risks to Safeguard Against

Adult-to-Client

Client-to-Client

Abuse

False Allegations
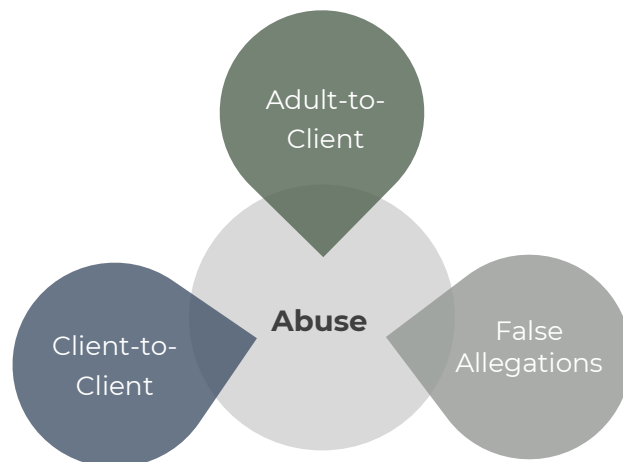
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8

Safeguarding Policy Framework:
Key Components

9

Safeguarding Policy: Decision Points

- ✔ Scope of the Safeguarding Policy
- ✔ Code of Conduct / Boundary Guidelines
- ✔ Screening and Hiring
- ✔ Onboarding and Training
- ✔ Supervision and Support
- ✔ Responding and Reporting
- ✔ Governance and Accountability

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Policy Structure Considerations

Organization-level policies
Define minimum expectations that apply to everyone

- ✓ Zero tolerance
- ✓ Screening
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Response protocols

Program-specific policies
- ✓ Boundaries
- ✓ High-risk activities
- ✓ Monitoring and supervision

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Safeguarding Policy – Component 1

Introduction to the Organization's Purpose and Mission / Zero Tolerance for Abuse / Organizational Culture

- Describe <u>why</u> the organization is committed to preventing and responding appropriately to any harm against vulnerable individuals (children & adults)
- Describe how safeguarding efforts promote and sustain the organization's mission and values
- Outline the organization's zero tolerance for abuse
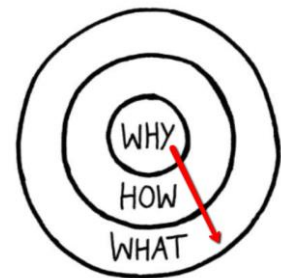
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12

Safeguarding Policy – Component 2

Behavioral Expectations and Interactions with Vulnerable Clients

- Describe defined expectations for safely and appropriately interacting with vulnerable clients
- Include the organization's Code of Conduct
- Outline both appropriate and inappropriate interactions to define the bandwidth of acceptable behavior

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Boundaries to Define

- Physical affection

- Verbal interactions

- Electronic communication

- Contact outside of regular program activities

- One-on-one interactions

- Gift giving and receiving

ACCEPTABLE

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Create Institutional Memory

- The safety of clients should depend on **standardized** policies and procedures and an **institutional culture** – **not personnel**.

- Employees and volunteers **come and go**. You need the **same** level of policy adherence and understanding regardless of individuals on the team.
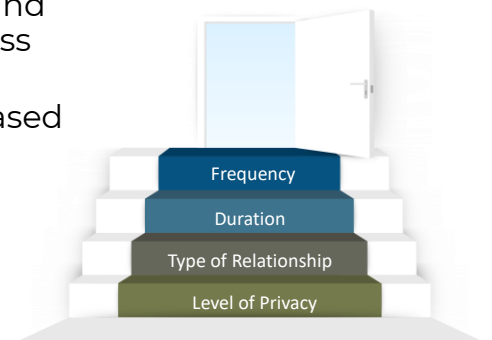

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Safeguarding Policy – Component 3

Screening and Hiring Processes

- Describe the comprehensive and standardized process for screening and hiring individuals who will have access to vulnerable clients
- Identify whether process changes based on the position's level of access to vulnerable clients
- Identify whether and to what extent applications, interviews, reference checks, and criminal background checks are conducted and reviewed through an abuse prevention lens

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Safeguarding Policy – Component 4

Onboarding and Training Requirements

- Describe onboarding and training requirements to equip staff with abuse prevention and safeguarding knowledge and skills
  - Content might include discussions on organization's zero tolerance for abuse, maintaining appropriate boundaries with clients, identifying and managing high-risk interactions and activities, internal and external responding and reporting procedures
  - Describe frequency (initial onboarding, annual, monthly staff meetings) and delivery systems (formal orientation, in-person discussion, online modules, group/team meetings) in which information and training will be delivered
- Identify whether requirements change based on the role/position's level of access to vulnerable clients
- Describe how the organization will maintain and verify compliance with defined training requirements

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Spacing Effect
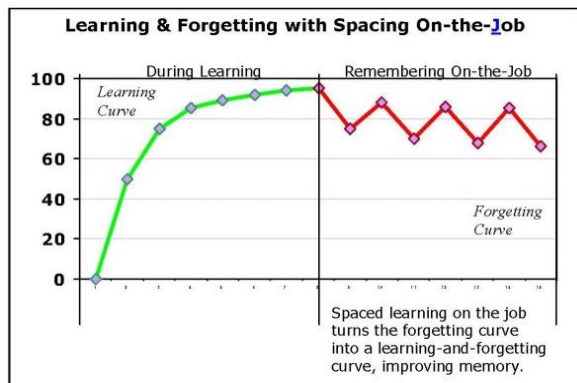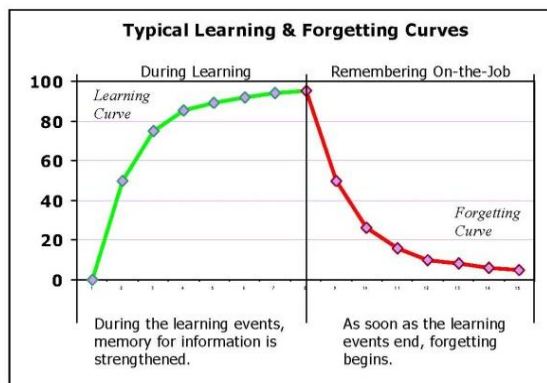
Source: Thalheimer, W. (2006, February). *Spacing Learning Events Over Time: What the Research Says*. Retrieved October 23, 2013, from http://www.work-learning.com/catalog/

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Safeguarding Policy – Component 5

Supervision and Support
- Describe the variety of ways in which the organization monitors and supervises:
  - Staff (employees and volunteers)
  - Vulnerable clients (peer interactions)
  - High-risk activities (overnight/residential, transportation, one-on-one interactions, etc.)
  - High-risk locations and architectural risks (bathrooms, bedrooms, isolated areas, etc.)
- Describe how the organization intervenes and supports staff and clients (i.e., supervision meetings, performance evaluations, progressive discipline process, implementation of safety or supervision plans)

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Safeguarding Policy – Component 6

Systems for Responding and Reporting
- Define the organization's internal response procedures for:
  - Red flag behaviors, low-level concerns, and policy violations
  - Suspicions or allegations of abuse
  - Client to client inappropriate behaviors
- Describe procedure for conducting internal investigations or incident reviews
- Describe how the organization seeks to minimize or remove barriers to reporting concerns or incidents
- Identify mechanisms for supporting victim-survivors

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Safeguarding Policy – Component 7

Governance Involvement and Accountability

- Describe how the organization's governing body is involved in supporting and enforcing the safeguarding policy and its initiatives for keeping staff and clients safe:
  - Identify when and under what circumstances the governing body is to be notified of concerns/incidents
  - Outline what kind of trending information is regularly presented to the governing body
  - Define how often the governing body reviews and gives feedback on program development, quality improvement, and leadership of safeguarding efforts
  - Explore how the safeguarding policy and its initiative overlay with external partners and third-party relationships

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Safeguarding Policy: Decision Points

- ✓ Scope of the Safeguarding Policy
- ✓ Code of Conduct / Boundary Guidelines
- ✓ Screening and Hiring
- ✓ Onboarding and Training
- ✓ Supervision and Support
- ✓ Responding and Reporting
- ✓ Governance and Accountability

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Existing Items to Reference or Incorporate into Safeguarding Policy

Employee Manual or Handbook

Company mission statement

Code of Conduct

Antidiscrimination and antiharassment policies

Human Resources hiring checklist

Grievance procedure

Whistleblower protections

Progressive disciplinary processes

Governance charter

Performance evaluations

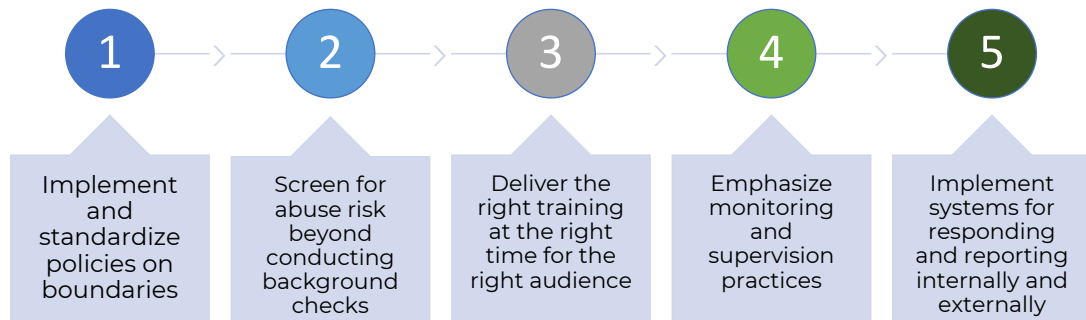Monitoring checklists

Incident report process

23
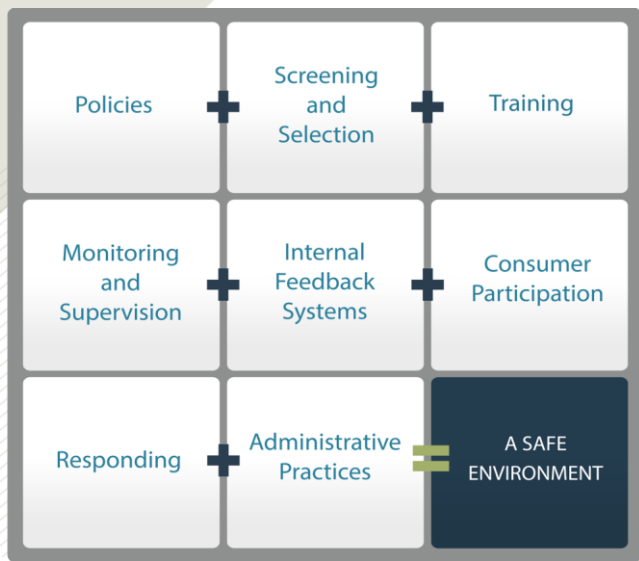
Praesidium Safety Equation

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IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN
Minimum Expectations
Designed to Mitigate Risk and Prevent Abuse

1 — Implement and standardize policies on boundaries

2 — Screen for abuse risk beyond conducting background checks

3 — Deliver the right training at the right time for the right audience

4 — Emphasize monitoring and supervision practices

5 — Implement systems for responding and reporting internally and externally

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Continuum of Commitment

Complacency ››› **Compliance** ››› **Commitment**

Complacency	Compliance	Commitment
Denies an abuse incident could happen	Focus on reacting to abuse rather than preventing it	Client protection is a designated responsibility
Hopes past success will prevent future abuse or exploitation	Uses state and licensing regulations as standards of care	Board is fully trained and informed
Has few standardized procedures	Minimizes red-flag behaviors	Policies clearly define appropriate boundaries and how to manage high-risk activities
High tolerance for "drift"	Treats incidents as staff failure not systems failure	Protocols focus on prevention
Safety protocols dependent on individuals		Training is scheduled frequently, presents relevant content, is impactful, and offered "just in time"
Responses tend to be punitive		Seeks external validation

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Creating a Culture of Safety

| Leadership is committed and vocal | Standards are clear and enforced | Everyone knows safety is part of their job | Everyone takes warning signs seriously | Everyone reports their concerns | Employee engagement is high | Quality is institutionalized |

27

2024
WEBINAR SERIES

Next Webinar

Unique Dynamics for
Safeguarding
Vulnerable Adult Populations

Wednesday,
July 17, 2024
3:00pm ET | 12:00pm PT

28

STAY IN TOUCH

Laura Hardin, LMSW
Senior Risk Consultant
LHardin@praesidiuminc.com

Colleen Crawford
Program Manager, Child and
Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding
Initiative
ccrawford@fadica.org

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29