

Center Dardedze Foundation

Child safeguarding policy



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Introduction

Since 2001, when the foundation "Centrs Dardedze" (hereinafter - Dardedze) was established, our goal has been to protect children from any form of violence.

The belief that child abuse is preventable as long as we take preventive action, is our main guiding principle in everything we do and stand for.

We know that everyone is responsible for the safety of children - from parents to by-passers, from teachers and doctors to ministers. However, there is a high tolerance for violence in Latvian society, especially violence against children (LU, 2020). Therefore, the Dardedze strives to work tirelessly to achieve a common public understanding of the risks and signs of violence, which would help create common action guidelines and timely involvement, helping every child who needs it.

Vision of Center Dardedze

Every child in Latvia is loved, protected, respected and cared for, living in a safe environment free from all forms of violence.

Mission of Center Dardedze

To prevent sexual exploitation of children and to provide assistance to children and their families who have experienced any form of violence.

Centers Dardedze core principles of action

1. **Implementation of children's rights** is the basis for every decision and action. We keep in mind the principles of children's rights in everything we do.
2. Ensure the **child's participation**. We involve a child in issues and decisions that concern his life.
3. **Do not discriminate**. We treat all children with respect.
4. **Respect the best interests of a child**. We always ask ourselves whether the decision we make will benefit a child both now and in the long term.
5. **Take into account the strengths of a child and child's family**. Every child and family has its own strengths - we see not only weaknesses, but also their resources that can help in their case.
6. **Do not harm a child**. Any intervention, even if guided by the best intentions, can cause harm, so we carefully consider before acting, plan our actions and then monitor the outcome.

The purpose of the Child safeguarding policy

Child safeguarding policy (hereinafter - CSP) is necessary for every organization and institution that has a child in its sight in one way or another, because it is the duty of every professional to make sure that the actions performed do not harm a child, are safe for a child and take place in the best interests of a child.

Dardedze is responsible for ensuring that the decisions that are made on its premises or organized activities do not harm a child and are in child's best interests. In cases where damage has occurred, there should be a clear scheme of action on how to act in such situations.

The United Nations Convention on the Protection of Children's Rights, as a base document on the protection of children's rights, can only be implemented in practice if everyone implements its principles in their daily work and puts the interests of the child as a priority (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 02.09.1990).



Violence against a child

The World Health Organization defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation” (World Health Organization, 2024).

In the legislation of the Republic of Latvia, violence against a child is defined as all forms of physical or emotional cruelty, sexual abuse, neglect or other types of behavior that threaten or may threaten the child's health, life, development or self-respect (Law on the Protection of Children's Rights, 19.06.1998).

Physical abuse is the deliberate use of force in contact with a child that is dangerous to the child's health or life, punishing the child's body or deliberately exposing the child to harmful factors, including exposure to tobacco smoke (Law on the Protection of Children's Rights, 19.06.1998). Using physical violence means hitting, whipping, pushing, throwing, beating, burning, pinching, cutting, slapping, strangling, locking in, not allowing to sleep or to fall asleep.

Emotional abuse is harming a child's self-esteem or psychologically affecting it (by threatening, cursing, humiliating, violently treating a loved one in the presence of the child or otherwise harming his emotional development (Law on Protection of Children's Rights, 19.06.1998). Emotional abuse includes threatening, cursing, mocking, rejecting, ignoring, humiliating the child.

Failure to fulfil childcare duties is the failure to ensure the physical, emotional, social needs, health care and education of a child, and also care that is not appropriate for the age of the child and endangers the health and development of the child in long-term (Law on Protection of Children's Rights, 19.06.1998).

Negligence is non-fulfilment of child care and supervision duties or carelessness, careless fulfillment (Law on Protection of Children's Rights, 19.06.1998).

Neglect is continuous or systematic negligence against a child which harms or may harm the development of the child or causes physical or psychoemotional suffering to the child (Law on the Protection of Children's Rights, 19.06.1998).

Sexual abuse any action of sexual nature towards the child with the purpose to provide or obtain sexual stimulation or sexual satisfaction, or another benefit which is performed by an adult or another child who, due to his or her age or development, is in the position of authority, trust, or power in relation to the victim, with physical contact or without such contact with the child's body, including subjecting the child to the sexuality of others or using information or communication technologies (Law on the Protection of Children's Rights, 19.06.1998).

Harmful sexual behavior is sexual behaviors expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old in sexual conversations or activities that are developmentally inappropriate for their age or developmental stage. Behavior can be harmful to oneself or others, as well as abusive towards another child, young person or adult. This can range from the use of sexually explicit words and phrases to sexual acts/penetration with other children or adults (Hackett, Branigan & Holmes, 2019; Garrett, Doherty, & Hann, 2017).

Terms used in CSP and their definitions

Child – every person under 18 years of age.

A person who works with children – a person who, on the basis of a contract or voluntarily, is involved in any activities that take place or are organized by Dardedze, during which direct contact and/or interaction with children is an integral part of the task to be performed. This status is automatically granted to all persons who are the founders of Dardedze, members of the board or who has entered into employment, legal relations with Dardedze.

In other cases, when concluding the Agreement, Dardedze evaluates the scope of the duties to be performed and may also grant this status to persons who have other types of legal relations with Dardedze (contract of voluntary work, author's remuneration, company, etc.).

A person who performs other duties in Dardedze – a person who, on the basis of a contract or volunteering, is involved in activities that take place or are organized by Dardedze, during which direct contact and/or interaction with the child(ren) is possible, but it is not an integral part of the task to be performed and it is casual in nature.

Visitor – a person who comes to Dardedze for consultation, excursion, training, as a media representative, researcher, student, a person who fulfills contractual or other obligations, etc. and does not meet the conditions of part 2 or 3 of this clause.

Responsible for the implementation of the CSP– An employee of Dardedze appointed by the order of the board of Dardedze, a trusted person, who primarily accepts and registers complaints, filling out the incident form, about violations of this Protocol and performs other duties related to the implementation of the Protocol as assigned by the board.

Persons to whom the CSP applies

1. The General and Special Parts of the CSP (see pages 12 and 13) are binding:
 - 1.1. for all full-time or part-time employees who have concluded an employment contract with Dardedze or an equivalent contract in accordance with the requirements of the regulatory acts of the Republic of Latvia;
 - 1.2. founders of Dardedze, board members and their authorized persons;
 - 1.3. volunteers who participate in the implementation of Dardedze programs and who come into contact with children;
 - 1.4. to any person who, according to the provisions of this CSP, meets the status of a person who works with children
2. The General Part of the CSP are binding:
 - 2.1. to any person who, under the terms of this Protocol, qualifies as a person who performs other duties in Dardedze;
 - 2.2. to visitors.

Conditions for the selection of employees and volunteers

Dardedze is convinced that one of the guarantees of the child's safety in the organization is qualified, trained and responsible personnel, therefore attention should be paid to the evaluation of the suitability of the employee/other involved persons

- All existing employees, volunteers / persons who work with children are obliged to comply with the conditions of this CSP.
- As proof that employees have read CSP and its conditions are clear, all employees sign an Affidavit stating that there is no such event, reason or personality traits that would make this person unsuitable for working with children and be employed in Dardedze. The Affidavit is kept by the person Responsible for the implementation of the CSP.
- In accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights, Dardedze is entitled to request the criminal records of the employees from the Criminal Registry.
- Selection and evaluation of the candidate's suitability for working with children of persons who apply for work/volunteer work in Dardedze or are about to enter other contractual relationships and for whom the status of "Persons who work with children" is evaluated by:

- ✓ requesting a statement from the Criminal Register about the person's previous criminal record or initiated criminal proceedings;
- ✓ on its own initiative, Dardedze is entitled to ask the candidate to submit two recommendations from previous workplaces and/or educational institutions about the person's possible suitability for work and contact with children;
- ✓ after signing an employment or any other contract, the person is obliged to participate in training organized by Dardedze on the principles of protection of children's rights and Dardedze's CSP. After participating in the training of CSP, the person signs an Affidavit that he or she is familiar with the CSP and that its conditions are clear.

Training and the dissemination of the CSP core principles

1. Dardedze ensures that all existing employees, volunteers and other people who work with children regularly receive all information related to the content and application of this CSP
2. After signing an employment or any other contract, the new employee is obliged to participate in training on the principles of Children's rights and the CSP. After participating in the training on the CSP, the person signs the Affidavit that he or she is familiar with the CSP and its conditions are clear.
3. At least once a year, at meeting of all employees, employees refresh their knowledge of the CSP as well as listens to the person responsible for the implementation of the CSP report on the violations and collectively searches for solutions to improve the Child Protection System in the organization. The Board of Dardedze is responsible for organizing training.
4. Everyone has the right to submit proposals for corrections in CSP to the Board of Dardedze or to the person responsible for the implementation of the CSP. Once a year, if it meets the best interests of a child ,the board decides on the inclusion of the suggestions or corrections in the CSP.
5. Dardedze ensures that every visitor has access to a summary of the General Part of this CSP in a visible place.
6. All employees are aware of and observe the principles mentioned in this CSP in their behavior, among other things, in their personal lives, thus not damaging Dardedze reputation and not endangering the safety and protection of children.



General part

Rules of conduct in the premises and territory of Dardedze

1. In Dardedze premises, everyone is obliged to behave politely and with mutual respect.
2. There are no important and unimportant people in Dardedze- the well-being of both a child and an adult is equally important. Everyone is responsible for making Dardedze safe and pleasant, but especially for making children feel safe and welcome here.
3. Dardedze is a place to receive support, but it is not a place for adults to express their emotions in a way that offends others, shout, use physical force or behave in another inappropriate way.
4. Only positive disciplining principles are used in Dardedze: praising good behavior; encouraging children's independence; if a child has become disobedient, the reasons are discussed, boundaries are agreed with the children, etc.
5. Everyone is obliged to immediately report to the person responsible for the implementation of the CSP about a violation of the child's rights that occurred in Dardedze or any violation of the provisions of CSP, and in cases where there is only a suspicion of a possible violation or threat to the child's safety. If the person responsible for the CSP is not available, fill out the incident form, which is located with the administrator.
6. No person who has voluntarily and in good faith reported a possible violation shall not be subject to any sanctions. No person who has voluntarily and in good faith reported a possible violation shall not be subject to any sanctions. Except for cases where the person himself has committed a violation of children's rights.
7. Dardedze ensures the availability of safe Internet content for a child by installing filters and blocking software on its territory, denying access to content inappropriate or offensive for child's age.

In the premises and territory of Dardedze is prohibited:

1. Hitting or in any other physical way affecting a child and being physically or emotionally abusive towards a child, for example physically punishing, emotionally humiliating, ignoring.
2. Use inadequate, indecent language expressions that can be harmful to a child and others around him.

3. Behaving inappropriately or sexually provocatively.
4. To smoke.
5. Being under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other intoxicating substances or using them. An employee of Dardedze does not have the right to hand over a child to a parent/guardian who is under the influence of intoxicating substances.
6. To photograph and/or to record, if the consent of the person has not been obtained. If photos/videos of children are taken – consent of the child and written permission of the child's parent/guardian.

Sanctions

If a Visitor of the center Dardedze or another person who cannot be subject to disciplinary punishment (see page 18) violates the provisions of the General Part of CSP, Dardedze has the rights to attain the person from the territory of Dardedze. In cases where person refuses to leave Dardedze territory, Dardedze employees have the right to inform the State Police. In such cases, the person is responsible for all losses (including the payment of a consultation/lesson that did not take place) that occurred because of the person's action/inaction.

Special part

Rules for people who work with children.

1. Always treat the child with respect, regardless of the child's gender, age, ethnic or social affiliation, the language the child speaks, religious beliefs, legal capacity, sexual orientation, etc.
2. In relations with the child, always behave in a friendly manner and use language that is understandable to the child and suitable for the respective age.
3. In cases where, due to the specifics of the work, it is necessary to work with a child in pairs, the employee is obliged, before starting the activities, to explain to the child, according to his age and capacity, the conditions of CSP and that the child has the right to report if, in his opinion, his rights are not being exercised. These same conditions must also be explained to the child's parent/guardian if there are any.

4. Be aware of situations that could put children at risk, and act accordingly, plan and organize work and work environment so that risks are minimized.
5. As far as possible, ensure the traceability of processes in work with the child.
6. Provide an open environment where any concerns or uncertainties can be discussed.
7. Ensure that there is a culture of mutual responsibility between employees and volunteers so that inappropriate practices or situations where there is a high risk that violence could occur are not covered up.
8. Encourage children about concerns if they arise. Discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and what is not, and what they should do if any problems arise.
9. Always ask the child's permission if there is any need to touch the child.
10. Always ask the permission of the child and his parents (guardians) before photographing or filming the child. Respect the child's right to say "no". Make sure any photos or videos of children are respectful.
11. To cooperate responsibly, confidentially, and fully in clarifying and eliminating the circumstances of any violation of children's rights.

In work with children is prohibited

1. Forming a relationship that violates the child's personal or bodily boundaries in a sexualized or otherwise disturbing manner.
2. Forming a relationship with a child that could be of a violent or exploitative nature in any way.
3. Abuse a child or expose a child to the risk of violence.
4. Invite the child you work with to go to the employee's/volunteer's home and stay there overnight.
5. To perform intimate activities instead of the child, which the child is capable of doing himself.
6. To condone or participate in the behavior of children that is illegal, unsafe, or violent. Deliberately treating a child in a humiliating, humiliating or degrading manner, or otherwise emotionally abusive.
7. Physically punishing a child for disobedience or using other inappropriate disciplining methods that humiliate the child.

NB! This list is not absolute. A key guiding principle is when working with a child, action or behavior that could be considered inappropriate or potentially abusive is avoided

Referral procedure

1. Dardedze undertakes to respond to every submitted report or complaint about a possible violation of the child's rights or a threat to the child's safety according to the procedure set forth in CSP.
2. The possibility and procedures for reporting and filing complaints must be explained to everyone concerned, and especially to children.
3. It is the duty of every Dardedze employee, contractor, and volunteer to respond to an ongoing or past violation of a child's rights or to suspicions that such a violation could occur and which in any way violates the provisions of CSP, according to the procedure set forth in the CSP.
4. The primary purpose of submitting and examining complaints is to identify any possible violation or threat to the child's rights and to prevent it.
5. In all activities related to the handling of complaints and reports, the parties involved are obliged to maintain confidentiality, and information about the child may be disclosed only to the extent necessary for the handling of the complaint.
6. The Board of Dardedze is responsible for ensuring that the procedure for investigation of the complaint specified in CSP is observed in each individual case.
7. A complaint about a violation of CSP or any other violation of the child's interests can be submitted orally, in writing, or electronically. See the section Filing Complaints for the exact complaint submission scheme.
8. In cases where the child's health and/or life is in imminent danger, the employee who finds out about the situation immediately acts by informing the appropriate responsible authorities (The State Police and/or Emergency Medical Aid) about direct threats to the child's health and/or life).

Filing a complaint

A complaint about a violation of CSP or any other violation of the child's rights can be submitted orally, in writing, or electronically:

1. To the person responsible for the implementation of CSP - Sandra Strūberga (sandra.struberga@centrsdardedze.lv);
2. To the person who, at the time of filing the complaint, performs office administrator duties, or to any other Dardedze employee, volunteer who is available to the complainant;

3. By sending by mail to the address of Dardedze office in Riga, Cieceres Street 3a;
4. Sending electronically to the e-mail address info@centrsdardedze.lv;
5. By placing reports, complaints, and suggestions in the box available in the lobby of Dardedze in a visible place for everyone (The contents of the box are checked every working day until the end of the working day).

Complaint processing

1. In every case, when a complaint is received, the recipient of the complaint is obliged to record its content on the incident form (see Appendix 2) and electronically send it or give it to the person responsible for the implementation of CSP, as well as to at least one member of the board. If the content of the complaint requires immediate action (the child is not safe, the danger is happening now) it is the responsibility of every recipient of the complaint to first do everything possible to prevent the immediate danger.
2. Every registered complaint, in accordance with the procedure specified in the first paragraph, is transferred without delay to the person responsible for the implementation of CSP, who examines the complaint himself or, in more complicated cases, refers it to the Commission for consideration.
3. The person responsible for the execution of CSP or the Commission investigates each individual case of complaint, guided by the information received, as well as by obtaining the necessary evidence and additional information on their own initiative. The clarification of the circumstances should be objective, justified, traceable during it, if necessary, expertise(s) may be determined, as well as the support of other professionals. Disciplinary punishment is applied in proportion to the seriousness of the violation.
4. If, during the review of the complaint, circumstances are revealed that indicate the responsibility of the Dardedze employee/volunteer for the violation of the provisions CSP or for the violation of rights that have the characteristics of an administrative or criminal offense, such a complaint can only be considered by the Commission.
5. If, as a result of the investigation, the Commission discovers that the provisions of CSP have been violated, the responsible person shall be called to disciplinary responsibility, if such responsibility is applicable to him in accordance with the requirements of the laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia.

6. If, during the investigation, the Commission learns of a possible violation of the rights of a child, which has signs of a criminal or administratively punishable violation, a written report is prepared for law enforcement institutions - the State Police, Child protection center.
7. The Commission examines each case; disciplinary punishment is imposed in proportion to the gravity of the offence.
8. Violation of the provisions of CSP is equivalent to violation of Labor Law.
9. The decision on the results of the complaint review is made in writing and possibly communicated to the complainant.
10. The decision of the person responsible for the implementation of CSP can be appealed to the Commission. The commission's decision can be appealed to the board of Dardedze

Complaints Review Commission

1. Complaints and reports are reviewed by the person responsible for the implementation of CSP, but in more complex cases - by the Complaints Review Commission (hereinafter referred to as the Commission), which consists of at least three people. The basic composition of the commission is as follows:
 - 1.1. one board member.
 - 1.2. one representative of the consultation department.
 - 1.3. one representative of the prevention department.
2. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the composition of the Commission may differ, and other specialists may be invited to it at the discretion of the members of the Commission. In the selection of the members of the commission, the priority criteria are the time spent in Dardedze, personal experience and good reputation.
3. In cases where a complaint is filed against one of the members of the Commission or the person responsible for the implementation of CSP, the member himself does not participate in the Commission, but at least two more specialists are invited to consider the complaint.
4. The person responsible for the implementation of CSP - Sandra Strüberga - is appointed in Dardedze by order of the board. Information about this person and the fact that anyone can contact her directly with a verbal or written complaint should be available in the lobby of Dardedze in a place visible to everyone.

Disciplinary sanctions

For violations of the provisions of CSP, the Commission may apply one of the following disciplinary penalties to the guilty person in accordance with the procedures established by law:

1. A comment;
2. Scolding;
3. Warning;
4. Reduction of salary and withholding up to 20% of the monthly amount for a period of up to 1 year;
5. Dismissal from employment.

A person may be suspended from performing duties in Dardedze without pay for the time the Commission is investigating the complaint.

Other sanctions

If a Visitor of Dardedze or another person who cannot be subject to disciplinary penalty violates the provisions of the General Part of CSP, Dardedze has the right to expel the person from the territory of Dardedze. In such cases, the person is responsible for all losses (including the payment of a consultation/lesson that did not take place) that occurred as a result of the person's action/inaction.

Appendix 2. Incident form

Incident form

No. _____

Date of incident: _____

Name and surname of the child involved: _____

Other involved persons:

Description of the
incident: _____

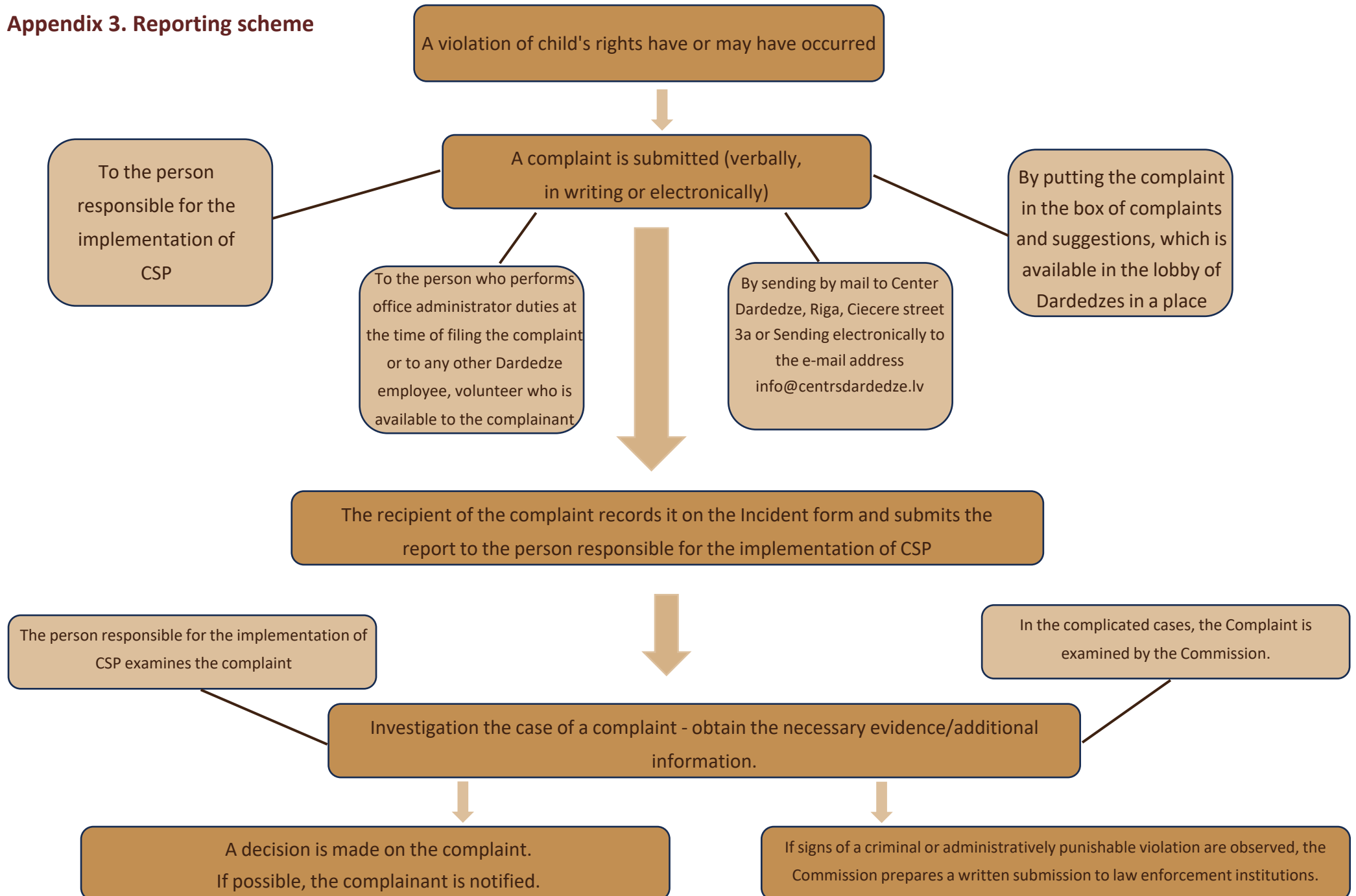
Actions taken: _____

Completed by (Name, surname, signature): _____

Decisions taken: _____

Assessment of the incident _____

Completed by (Name, surname, signature): _____

Appendix 3. Reporting scheme

References

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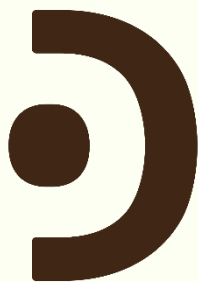
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