



Recommendations and Best Practices

Safeguarding, Promoting Welfare and Trainee Protection in Sail Training - Policy

Objective

Sail Training International (STI), an association with around 30 National Sail Training Organisations (NSTOs), wishes to alert its members to duties of care that are recommended to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of children/vulnerable adults (trainees) and all onboard sail training vessels.

Duty of Care and Responsibilities

STI has a responsibility to highlight the importance of having good Safeguarding measures and appropriate Trainee Protection Policies aboard NSTO member sail training vessels, as well as promoting Best Practice examples. STI also has the responsibility to ensure that any trainee that is awarded an STI administered bursary, must be placed with an NSTO member, or other vessel operator, that demonstrate they comply with these principles, guidelines and responsibilities.

NSTOs have a responsibility to ensure that all of their sail training operator members should have a clear trainee policy that defines the organisation's commitment to providing a safe environment. The policy should include procedures that cover:

- the safe recruitment of staff and/or volunteers, including a robust process for checking that they are safe to work with children and vulnerable adults;
- good practice guidelines to ensure the safety and welfare of trainees at all times, both onboard and ashore during the voyage;
- the handling of concerns, reports or allegations concerning trainees.

Individual Sail Training Operators have a duty of care to all who sail aboard their vessels and have a responsibility to review their Safeguarding, Welfare and Trainee Protection policies on a regular basis to ensure that they are 'fit for purpose'; and that their staff and volunteers receive appropriate training to effectively implement them.

Principles

All those who come into contact with trainees aboard sail training vessels, including people who do not have a specific role in relation to Child Protection, have a duty to Safeguard children and young adults from harm and to promote their Welfare.

Child Protection is a part of Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare for trainees. It refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are at a risk of suffering, abuse or significant harm.

Guidelines and Recommended Policies and Procedures

Pre-emptive measures to consider:

- A robust and thorough recruitment process of staff and volunteers should give consideration to a written application process that requires appropriate background information, disclosures of any prior claims or allegations of sexual abuse or other inappropriate conduct, and provide the names of references to the good character of the crew member or volunteer.
- A designated representative(s) of the organisation will interview each prospective staff member/volunteer. This screening process will include specific questions regarding the existence of any prior claims of inappropriate behaviour with respect to youth or, generally, in the work environment.
- Engage a 3rd party service provider to conduct the background check including appropriate inquiries regarding any previous record of sexual abuse or other unlawful activity. (E.g. the UKs Disclosure and Barring Service).
- Routine Safeguarding, Welfare and Child/Vulnerable Adult Protection training should be delivered to all persons involved with the organisation that have direct contact with children, young and vulnerable adults.
- All persons working with minors should sign a code of behaviour; this declaration should include references to adult-child and adult-adult abuses and should form an integral part of the volunteer or employee engagement.
- The Board of Directors/Trustees should appoint at least one member of the organisation who shall be responsible for receiving reports of any abuse or inappropriate conduct and, further, for taking appropriate action upon receiving such a report.
- A strict recording tool is essential so that allegations of abuse are properly documented.
- All children and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse. All suspicions and allegations of inappropriate behaviour will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately including making immediate contact with the appropriate authorities (e.g. Youth Services, Police).

- All employees, volunteers, trainees and other persons engaged by or within the organisation shall be asked to report any incident of abuse, or suspected abuse, that they witness, or that is reported to them, to the designated representative or any other member of the Board of Directors.
- Employees, volunteers, trainees and other persons engaged by, or within the organisation, shall be made aware of their obligations to notify the proper law enforcement agency.

Active Policies and Procedures (incidents recommended to be reported)

- Any person witnessing bullying, disrespectful language or disrespectful behavior, including sexual jokes or harassment;
- any person witnessing threatening behavior, or witnessing someone become a victim of intentionally inflicted physical injury;
- any person witnessing inappropriate touching and/or inappropriate sexual contact;
- any person witnessing verbal, psychological or physical bullying.

Post-event Policies and Procedures (recommended)

- The notified member of the Board of Directors will promptly notify the proper law enforcement agencies that an incidence of possible abuse has been reported.
- The Board of Directors, proceeding with counsel, will be advised to instigate either: a criminal investigation, a child protection investigation, or a misconduct investigation.
- Appropriate counseling and support should be available to all persons involved in the allegation.
- Record information that is limited to the facts. Unnecessary interviews with complainants could prejudice the integrity of evidence that may eventually have to be presented in court.

Abuse (inter-personal behaviour)

Defined as the improper and wrongful use of power, strength, intelligence, position, or authority to ill-treat or hurt another person. Such wrongdoing may manifest itself through sexual, physical and/or emotional maltreatment and, potentially, neglect. Accordingly, it is important to underscore that when children and vulnerable adults are harmed, it is often by people whom they know and trust.

Relationships to supervise

- Adult Sea Staff -> Trainee
- Adult volunteer -> Trainee
- Adult volunteer -> Sea Staff
- Sea Staff <-> Sea Staff
- Minor <-> Minor
- Volunteer <-> Volunteer

Summary

Sail Training as an activity is very diverse, with numerous operators around the world offering very different experiences for trainees. As such, each vessel operator will need to develop its own detailed Safeguarding, Welfare and Trainee Protection Policies based around these principles, guidelines and recommendations laid out in this document.

It is important that NSTOs do all they can reasonably do to ensure that their member operators fulfil their obligations and responsibilities. Safeguarding, Welfare and Trainee Protection must be the member-operators' absolute priorities and should assign the necessary resources to ensure good practice. Trustees, Directors, Sea Staff and volunteers should be made aware of their individual responsibilities and have the appropriate level of training and briefing.

STI is committed to raising awareness and standards as set out above within sail training throughout the world. STI will continue to provide NSTOs and vessel operators with guidelines, recommendations and best practice examples as they develop. STI will run regular workshops and presentations on this important subject. STI welcomes feedback and discussion and looks forward in developing these this policy with NSTOs and their member-operators.