

Legal Action for Persons with Disabilities

Safeguarding Policy

1.0 Preamble

- 1.1 LAPD is a non-governmental and non-profit making organisation formed by lawyers with disabilities with a principle purpose of dispensing legal aid to indigent persons with disabilities basically through counseling, advice and representation in courts of law. LAPD was registered with the Non-Governmental Organization Board in 2005. The organization exists to provide free and sustainable legal aid to indigent persons with disabilities in Uganda.
- 1.2 Our organisation recognises that recurring events of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment (SEAH) and general neglect in the disability services sector, demonstrate that processes geared to safeguard children and adults with a disability remain insufficient. This background as well as our strategic direction provide the backdrop against which this policy and attendant implementation framework have been developed. Specially, the policy is a demonstration of our zero-tolerance to SEAH, and commitment to addressing safeguarding throughout our work, through prevention, including during public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.3 This policy has been developed through a consultative process, and the organization will publish and document the confirmation of its adoption following a formal announcement of the same by the Executive Director to staff, Board and associated personnel (see section 4). The announcement will include a high-level commitment by the organization to: (a) all staff, associated personnel and wider community against SEAH; and (b) implementing this policy and related requirements including not hiring or continued employment of any person who poses unacceptable risk to the organization and those around them.

Vision:

“A Uganda where persons with disabilities (PWDS) have their rights upheld with dignity and respect.”

Mission:

“To promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities in Uganda through legal rights education, strategic litigation and legal aid to indigent people with disabilities.”

Thematic areas

- Legal Aid Provision.
- Strategic Litigation.
- Advocacy and Policy Influencing.

LAPD operates under four Strategic Objective;

- To enhance legal aid provision for indigent PWDs.
- To strengthen strategic litigation to influence legislation, policy implementation and reform.
- To strengthen advocacy to influence positive changes underpinning the

- 1.4 The policy and attendant operational guidelines will be reviewed and updated and re-approved through the organization's standard procedures every three (3) years or earlier if warranted.

2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to protect all persons especially those with disabilities from any form of harm, sexual exploitation or abuse and harassment (PSEAH) that may arise due to coming in contact with Legal Action for Persons with Disabilities Uganda (LAPD) staff and associated personnel¹. The harm may arise from:
 - a. The conduct of staff or personnel associated with LAPD
 - b. The design and implementation of LAPD's programmes and activities
- 2.2 The policy also lays out the commitments made by LAPD and measures to reduce the risk, and to respond appropriately to PSEAH including during public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic².

3.0 What is Safeguarding?

- 3.1 For purposes of this policy, safeguarding means establishing frameworks or measures that are intended to protect everyone including a person with disability (PWD) who is associated in one way or another with our organisation, through:
 - a. Focusing on compliance with international human rights law³;
 - b. Protecting people from sexual abuse or exploitation as well as from inappropriate behavior such as bullying and harassment (PSEAH); and
 - c. Protecting people's well-being and safety during public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3.2 Further definitions relating to safeguarding are provided in the glossary in section 9 of this policy.

4.0 Scope

- 4.1 The policy applies to:
 - a. All staff contracted by LAPD;
 - b. Associated personnel whilst engaged with work or visits related to LAPD, including but not limited to the following: external service providers or contractors, interns, researchers, consultants, volunteers, journalists, photographers, and staff from other organizations (unless they have their own safeguarding policy of a similar standard); and
 - c. Board of Directors.

¹ See 'Scope' for definition of associated personnel

² The Safeguarding Manual includes the recommended actions for LAPD

³ LAPD's work is based on the principles of international conventions and instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

5.0 LAPD's Commitment to Safeguarding

- 5.1 LAPD will take all reasonable measures to prevent harm, including all forms of exploitation, abuse, bullying, harassment and abuse of power that may arise from contact with its staff, programmes or operations.
- 5.2 LAPD is committed to ensuring the identification, mitigation and management of a wide range of risks to:
- a. **Indigent persons with disabilities and wider community-** LAPD makes every effort to ensure the safety and protection of individuals and groups, including children and adults with whom it is in contact, particularly PWD that may be especially vulnerable and at risk;
 - b. **Staff, Board, volunteers and other associates-** LAPD seeks to establish a safe and respectful workplace that ensure the inherent dignity of all persons especially PWD, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, in safe environments free from harassment, abuse, and discrimination; and
 - c. **The organization-** LAPD must preserve its reputation for good governance and sound management by addressing fiduciary and related risks such as Fraud, Theft, Bribery and Corruption, and Money Laundering.
- 5.3 LAPD requires all staff and associated personnel to commit in writing to upholding this Policy and the associated Code of Conduct, through a Statement of Commitment. Partner organisations commitments will be reflected in specific clauses in their written agreements with LAPD. A separate Code of Conduct for Visitors will apply to all visitors.

6.0 LAPD's Safeguarding Standards

6.1 LAPD commits to addressing safeguarding throughout its work, through the following eight standards:

Standard	Description	Critical action(s)
Standard 01:	Everyone connected with the organisation knows how to keep children and adults especially PWDs safe at all times including during public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination of policy, Code of Conduct for staff and associated staff and Safeguarding Manual • Training and support of staff and associated personnel • Designation of Safeguarding Focal Person
Standard 02:	Implementing partners have measures including PSEAH to safeguard children and adults especially PWDs that are consistent with LAPD's standards and guiding principles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct due-diligence on any partner organization we work with • Ensure implementing partner's safeguarding policy has been assessed to see if it is consistent with our policy • Support implementing partners where possible.
Standard 03:	Children, adults, PWD and caregivers understand LAPD's commitment to safeguarding and know what to do if concerns arise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the wider community especially PWD with whom we work are aware of our policy and the Code of Conduct, and how they can report any concerns.
Standard 04:	LAPD's safeguarding commitments are integrated into existing organisational processes and systems and, where necessary, new procedures will be introduced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job descriptions for all staff, consultants and volunteers- will include a statement on the position or role's responsibilities to meet the requirements of LAPD's Safeguarding Policy • All advertisements for positions involving work with children and adults especially those with disability will reference LAPD's commitment to safeguarding. • At least two referees who have knowledge of the applicant's experience and suitability to work with children and adults, especially PWD will be obtained and verified. • Conduct a police background check or equivalent for all positions involving direct contact with children and adults or where safeguarding risks relevant to the role have been identified. • All staff employment contracts and contracts with volunteers and representatives will contain provision for disciplinary action, up to