MITROVICA ROCK SCHOOL

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

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Safeguarding Policy

Policy Statement, Purpose & Scope

Mitrovica Rock School uses music to bridge ethnic, ideological and religious divides between people, especially youth, in North and South Mitrovica and throughout the Kosovo region.

We create safe environments where participants can explore and develop their creativity. We believe that all people have the right to be protected from harm and we commit to act in their best interests at all times.

This policy and the associated guidelines raise awareness of safeguarding issues, define expectations when working with participants and detail our approach to promoting participants' wellbeing – protecting them from violence, abuse and exploitation.

It applies to all those working on behalf of Mitrovica Rock School including salaried staff, freelancers, volunteers, work placements and our supervisory board. Partner organizations are required to sign this policy or provide an alternative that is based on the underlying principles and legal frameworks laid out in this document.

Definitions and Legal Basis

Our policy has been drawn up on the basis of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (1989) and takes the cultures, religions and laws of the communities in which we work into account.

Child:	a person under the age of 18[1]
Vulnerable person:	a child or adult who, by reason of disability, age, gender, illness, the context they are in or as a result of social and other inequalities, is or may be at risk of significant harm or exploitation.

Approach and Guiding Principles

Mitrovica Rock School has been working to connect youth from Kosovo's divided communities for 18 years. Our long-term commitment to peace-building– informed by *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Music's Power to Connect and Active Nonviolence* – has allowed us to develop ways of working that combine a European understanding of best practices around safeguarding with an awareness and respect for the particular needs and complexities of the region in which we work.

The wellbeing of our participants is of paramount importance. Safeguarding is embedded in our practice and can be best understood through the MRS's approach of demand-driven learning, informed by the didactic approach of Fontys Rockacademie and the five working principles of Musicians Without Borders: safety, inclusion, equality, creativity and quality.

[1] In some areas where we work, a child under the age of 18 may not have a parent or guardian or may be considered in their country to be of age of consent to participate in the program. In these cases, consent of the child will be obtained according to local laws.

These principles apply to all, regardless of age, gender, identity, ethnicity, disability, language, sexuality, family make up or beliefs. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognize that individuals' cultural identity or disability may result in a need for different and / or additional support.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice guidelines annually.

This policy was last reviewed on: October 26, 2026

Signed:

Milizza Kosova
Director of Operations

MITROVICA ROCK SCHOOL
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Signed:

Emir Hasani
Director of Programs

Safeguarding Procedures and Guidelines

Our safeguarding strategy provides protection to all people with whom we work and advises staff on safeguarding issues and protocol. These procedures are organized into 5 safeguarding areas: Prevent, Recognize, Respond, Refer and Record.

1. PREVENT

Recruitment and support of staff and volunteers:

Mitrovica Rock School will:

- ensure that new staff and volunteers **provide a CV** or alternative record of their employment history.
- request a **criminal background check** for all staff and international volunteers working with vulnerable people, unless it is not possible or safe to do so because of ongoing conflict or police corruption.
- gain **two references** with regard to the candidate's suitability for work with children and vulnerable adults.
- ensure all staff, partners and volunteers read and agree to the **code of conduct.**
- provide **safeguarding training** for all relevant personnel.

Risk Assessments

Our commitment to work in one of Europe's most divided, politically volatile and economically depressed regions results in our program taking place in a potentially risky environment. Key staff working on our program:

- create a written risk assessment before the start of projects;
- will actively remain updated and well informed about current situational risks so that they can brief visitors to their program;
- take all reasonable steps to mitigate these risks and review them on an ongoing basis in consultation with colleagues and partners.

Participant Voice and Consent

Our teachers honor all participants and are sensitive to the various factors that may influence their ability to participate. We value open communication, engage participants in an ongoing process of invitation and consent, provide space for formal and informal feedback and listen to what participants tell us both verbally and non-verbally.

We ensure that:

- participants know they have a right to feel safe and are aware that they can discuss any concerns with our teachers and other personnel with whom they feel comfortable.
- we seek participants' consent if we intend to capture their image in any way. Consent is sought in a number of ways: in writing and through information forms, conversation, participatory activities or in closed groups on social media.

Parental Consent

- Where it is possible to contact parents, we will obtain consent from the child's parent or guardian through appropriate channels
- Where it is not possible to contact parents/guardians, or permission for photographs or videos is denied, we will ensure that individual participants are not identifiable in any images we capture.

Supervision of participants

- All staff and volunteers will avoid spending time alone with vulnerable people. If it is necessary for any reason for staff to be alone with a vulnerable person, however, efforts will be taken to ensure they can be seen by others.
- MRS has emergency contact details for all participants.

Monitoring Practice

Safeguarding activities and records are monitored by the Designated Safeguarding Lead in conversation with the Director of Programs and teachers. A log of incident reports is maintained in a secure database and will be summarized on an as-needed basis for the Supervisory Board. The Safeguarding Policy and Procedures will be reviewed on an annual basis and revised, as necessary.

2. RECOGNIZE

What is Abuse?

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment that can involve inflicting harm, or failing to act to prevent harm. The categories of abuse are listed as follows and are to be used as a guide for monitoring and reporting suspected abuse, alongside an understanding of the complex context in which Mitrovica Rock School operates.

- **Neglect:** persistently failing to meet a vulnerable person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, resulting in impairment of their health or development. Failure to take all reasonable measures to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter; protect individuals from harm; supervise them properly; make sure they receive appropriate medical care.
- **Sexual harassment or abuse:** forcing a vulnerable person to take part in sexual activity, or to be subjected to sexual advances or remarks. This does not have to involve violence and the individual may not be aware of what is happening. It includes, for example, penetrative and non-penetrative sex; sexually exploiting a vulnerable person in exchange for gifts, money or affection, making, looking at and/or distributing indecent images.
- **Physical abuse:** threatening or inflicting actual physical injury on a person, or a failure to prevent physical injury or suffering of a person.
- **Emotional abuse:** persistent emotional ill-treatment or rejection – deliberately scaring, humiliating or verbally abusing a vulnerable person or denying love, care and encouragement; or controlling and limiting individuals' opportunities to realize their rights to social and cultural life.
- **Exploitation:** requiring a child (or adult) to perform any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.
- **Substance abuse:** the use, manufacturing or distribution of illicit substances.

Signs and Symptoms

Children and adults who have suffered abuse or exploitation may be afraid to tell anybody about what they have experienced. They may struggle with feelings of guilt, shame or confusion, particularly if the abuser is a parent, carer or friend.

Here are some common signs that someone may be being abused**. Please note that this is not a checklist**. It is very hard, even for experts, to determine whether abuse is taking place and many of these signs may be exhibited by people dealing with other conditions or traumatic experiences.

- Sudden changes in personality and/or eating habits
- Outbursts of anger and/or violent behavior
- Lack of confidence
- Fear, anxiety
- Repeated negative statements about themselves
- Lack of basic needs, e.g., poor hygiene, persistent hunger
- Reluctance to go home after activities/school
- Showing an inexplicable fear (or making excuses to avoid) particular places/people
- Reluctance to change clothes (e.g., undressing) for certain activities and/or spending long periods of time in the bathroom
- Self-harming (includes head banging, scratching, cutting)
- Not receiving adequate medical attention after injuries/illnesses
- Flinching in response to sudden but harmless actions, e.g. someone raising their hand
- Inappropriate behavior for age, including knowledge of adult issues (sex, drugs, alcohol), regularly engaging in sexual play, or older children regressing to the behavior of younger children.

Local Perspective

It is important to note that abuse is not universally understood. Behavior that is viewed as abusive in some parts of Europe may be viewed differently in the regions where we work.

Mitrovica Rock School will not tolerate any form of abuse within our program. Additionally, we will:

- model our nonviolent approach to partner organizations through our work and facilitate training where necessary and possible to ensure safeguarding standards are met in our program;
- always act when a vulnerable person asks for help or discloses abuse that is happening within or outside of our program, or when we notice abuse taking place that would be recognized as such by law, e.g. sexual abuse, substance abuse.

3. RESPOND

Responding to disclosures

If a child or vulnerable adult tells you they are being harmed, it is important to respond appropriately:

DO:

- Be accessible and receptive
- Listen carefully
- Stay calm
- Take it seriously
- Reassure the person that they are right to tell someone
- Let them know what will happen next, including your responsibility to share the information with relevant authorities (e.g. I need to tell someone what you told me)
- Seek advice from an appropriate person (see reporting system below)
- Make a careful record of what was said
- As far as possible, protect the person from further harm (e.g., refer children to relevant child protection authorities to ensure their safety)

DON'T

- React strongly (e.g. saying "how disgusting")
- Jump to conclusions, especially about the abuser
- Speculate or accuse anybody
- Say that you will keep their secret
- Ask leading questions
- Make promises
- Stop someone who is speaking freely
- Tell others their story who do not need to know in order to keep the person safe, or reveal to the abuser what they have said
- Act alone in responding to the disclosure of abuse, but rather contact relevant authorities

To avoid leading questions, remember TED:

- **T**ell me what happened
- **E**xplain to me as best as you can
- **D**escribe it to me

These guidelines apply to all disclosures of abuse, whether an accusation is directed towards a parent or Mitrovica Rock School teacher or staff.

Responding to observations

If you have noticed something that concerns you…

- Volunteers: refer your concern to the designated staff members as soon as possible
- Staff: talk to the vulnerable person **if you feel equipped to do so.**
- Managers: talk to the vulnerable person's parent or caregiver **if you feel equipped to do so and this would not put the vulnerable person at further risk.**

Everyone should follow the same do/don't guidelines above, then proceed to our referral procedures.

4. REFER

All concerns or allegations of abuse must be handled quickly, sensitively and confidentially. Refer the issue as soon as possible to the relevant person, as detailed below, and do not discuss the details with anyone who does not need to know.

Teachers, volunteers, local staff and guests: If you are concerned about a vulnerable person you are working with, contact your manager as soon as possible:

Mitrovica Rock School	Directors: Milizza Kosova Emir Hasani	Milizza: milizza@mitrovicarockschool.org Emir: emir@mitrovicarockschool.org
Musicians Without Borders – program staff	Program Manager: Wendy Hassler-Forest	Wendy: wendy@mwb.ngo
Musicians Without Borders - general staff	MWB Safeguarding Lead: Anna Swinkels	anna@mwb.ngo

Any incidents that the reporting party believes require further inquiry will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Director of Programs at MRS's office:

MRS Safeguarding Lead/Director of Operations – Milizza Kosova: milizza@mitrovicarockschool.org;
Director of Programs – Emir Hasani: emir@mitrovicarockschool.org

- **If your concern involves a Director, you can contact partner organization MWB directly at the contact information above.**
- **If the vulnerable person is in immediate danger, call the local emergency services (e.g., police).**

Mitrovica Rock School will take all safeguarding referrals and concerns seriously. We will listen to and support the victim and/or the person reporting abuse.

Once a concern is shared with Mitrovica Rock School' office, the Director of Operations or Director of Programs will decide whether a referral to social services or other relevant authority is necessary. The person who reported the incident to the office may be asked for further information or to continue monitoring the situation.

Any decisions made must consider the culture we are working in when deciding what safeguarding actions to take, as well as the legal mechanism in place to handle certain referrals and the ways in which inappropriate actions could potentially further endanger the child, vulnerable adult, and/or the sustainability of our work and the safety of our staff. We will act appropriately, with the fullest consideration of the best interests of the person and on the basis of expert advice in all cases, regardless who an allegation involves.

5. RECORD

Staff and volunteers working with vulnerable people should make clear, written records of any concerns or allegations of abuse **as soon as possible** after the event/concern is raised.
Records should contain as much detail of the concern/allegation as possible, including:

- the date, time and place
- physical appearance/behavior of the vulnerable person
- anything that was said (verbatim if possible)
- names of others present
- any actions taken

When writing, keep in mind that your account may be viewed by the vulnerable person's family members, social services and/or the police. It is important to try to write objectively; distinguishing between opinion and fact and avoiding judgmental language.

Make sure you sign and date the record before submitting to the MRS office (refer to procedure above under 4. REFER).

Mitrovica Rock School will:

- Keep clear, written records of all concerns or allegations of abuse
- Ensure records are updated with all actions taken at each stage of inquiry
- Ensure records are stored safely and securely

SAFEGUARDING CODE OF CONDUCT

For Staff, Trainers, Volunteers and Guests who work with Mitrovica Rock School (MRS) projects and programs

Please read this entire document carefully, sign and return to Milizza Kosova, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Mitrovica Rock School (milizza@mitrovicarockschool.org).

All Mitrovica Rock School staff, trainers, adult trainees, volunteers, and third parties involved with Mitrovica Rock School programs must follow these rules to prevent, stop and report any and all abuse to participants in Mitrovica Rock School's program.

Do's:

1. Treat participants with respect regardless of age, race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, disability or other status.
2. Be aware of particular risks or vulnerabilities of participants and be aware of your position as someone with power or authority.
3. Be aware of situations that may present risks (for example, being alone with participants, taking film/photo or interviewing for work purposes/reporting). You may only proceed if the situation is within the boundaries of this policy and after obtaining clearance from management and the participants.
4. Plan and organize the work, workplace or visit to manage risks.
5. As much as possible, be visible in working with or visiting participants.
6. Foster and ensure a culture of openness to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed.
7. Ensure accountability amongst staff, trainers and volunteers to document and address poor practices or potentially abusive behavior.
8. Talk to participants about their contact with staff and other participants, inform them about what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior according to MRS policies and procedures and encourage them to raise any concerns.
9. Report concerns or incidents of participant abuse to the designated persons and authorities.

Dont's:

1. Do not develop physical or sexual relationships with participants. Do not behave physically in a manner that is inappropriate (for example fondle, hold, hug, or kiss participants or touch participants in an inappropriate way) or behave sexually. Do not sleep in the same room or bed as the participants.
2. Do not act in ways that may be abusive, exploitative, physically or emotionally harmful or act in ways which places a participant at risk of this.
3. Do not spend time alone with participants away from others including taking a participant away from the project alone or having meetings alone. If privacy is needed, other staff member(s) must be aware and a door must be left open.
4. Do not condone, or participate in, behavior of participants which is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
5. Do not use corporal punishment or otherwise physically assault participants.
6. Do not act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade participants, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
7. Do not discriminate against, show unfounded differential treatment to, or favor particular participants.
8. Do not let participants do domestic or other labor which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their education, or which places them at risk of injury.

9. Do not allow a participant to be systematically neglected and do not fail to protect them from any harm that you are aware of.
10. Do not abandon your professional distance by taking on a personal caring role such as by becoming a personal donor or a godparent.

Photographs, video/film, and other representation

1. Please refer to MRS management before taking any photographs or film. Photographs and videos may only be taken and shared with the consent of the participant, her/his parents or caretakers and Mitrovica Rock School.
2. Do not make promises (e.g. payment) to the participant in return for photos/videos.
3. Take images of participants that are dignified and respectful and that do not present them as victims, vulnerable or submissive.
4. Ensure that images could not be interpreted as sexual or condone any other situation of abuse.
5. Protect the safety and privacy of participants and their families by not using identifiable images in the media or internet without their explicit consent.

Any breach of this Code of Conduct can result in one or more of the following actions taken by MRS management: a warning; an immediate termination of your stay at the project location; the withholding of part or all of any agreed-upon payments for your services; the decision by MRS not to employ or include you in its project work in the future; criminal prosecution. Any extra costs involved (e.g. earlier return flights, lodgings, etc.) will be your own responsibility and not covered by MRS.

Statement of Agreement:

I have read the Safeguarding Code of Conduct carefully, and agree to abide by its content and conditions while working for, or visiting, Mitrovica Rock School's program.

Name: Date:

Signature: Place:

PRINCIPLES FOR ETHICAL REPORTING (for journalists, reporters and researchers)

Guidelines for interviewing program participants:

1. Do no harm to any participant; avoid questions, attitudes or comments that are judgmental, insensitive to cultural values, that place a participant in danger or expose a participant to humiliation, or that reactivate a participant's pain and grief from traumatic events.
2. Do not discriminate in choosing participants to interview because of sex, race, age, religion, status, educational background or physical abilities.
3. No staging: Do not ask participants to tell a story or take an action that is not part of their own history.
4. Ensure that the participant or parent/guardian knows they are talking with a reporter. Explain the purpose of the interview and its intended use.
5. Obtain permission from the participant and his or her parent/guardian for all interviews, videotaping and, when possible, for photographs. When possible and appropriate, this permission should be in writing. This always applies to individual photos and videos of participants. Permission must be obtained in circumstances that ensure that the participant and parent/guardian are not coerced in any way and that they understand that they are part of a story that might be disseminated locally and globally. This is usually only ensured if the permission is obtained in the participant's language and if the decision is made in consultation with an adult the participant trusts.
6. Pay attention to where and how the participant is interviewed. Limit the number of interviewers and photographers. Try to make certain that participants are comfortable and able to tell their story without outside pressure, including from the interviewer. In film, video and radio interviews, consider what the choice of visual or audio background might imply about the participant and her or his life and story. Ensure that the participant would not be endangered or adversely affected by showing their home, community or general whereabouts.

Guidelines for reporting on participants

1. Do not further stigmatize any participant; avoid categorizations or descriptions that expose a participant to negative reprisals - including additional physical or psychological harm, or to lifelong abuse, discrimination or rejection by their local communities.
2. Always provide an accurate context for the participant's story or image. Please avoid unnecessary references to a participant's ethnic, political or religious identity.
3. Always change the name and obscure the visual identity of any participant who is identified as:
   - A victim of sexual abuse or exploitation,
   - A perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse,
   - HIV positive, or living with AIDS, unless the participant and a parent/guardian gives fully informed consent,
   - Charged or convicted of a crime,
   - Current or former child combatant,
   - Political activist,
   - Refugee.
4. In certain circumstances of risk or potential risk of harm or retribution, change the name and obscure the visual identity of any participant who is identified as an asylum seeker, a refugee or an internally displaced person.

5. In some cases, using a participant's identity - their name and/or recognizable image - is in the participant's best interests (see examples below). In these cases, use of their identity must be clearly explained and approved by the participant and his or her parent/guardian. However, when the participant's identity is used, they must still be protected against harm and supported through any potential acts of stigmatization or reprisals. Some examples of these special cases are:
   - When a participant initiates contact with the reporter, wanting to exercise their right to freedom of expression and their right to have their opinion heard.
   - When a participant is part of a sustained program of activism or social mobilization and wants to be so identified.
   - When a participant is engaged in a psychosocial program and claiming their name and identity is part of their healthy development.
6. Confirm the accuracy of what the participant has to say, either with other participants or an adult, preferably with both.
7. When in doubt about whether a participant is at risk, report on the general situation for participants rather than on an individual participant, no matter how newsworthy the story.

I hereby declare to have received and taken note of the Safeguarding Code of Conduct and Principles for Ethical Reporting and will respect the policies of Mitrovica Rock School.

Name: Date:

Signature: Place:

INCIDENT REPORT TEMPLATE

To be completed whenever there is any incident (reported or witnessed), of injury, violence, or harassment within Mitrovica Rock School's program.

The report should be completed by the person reporting and submitted to the Designated Safeguarding Lead/Director of Operations (Milizza Kosova: milizza@mitrovicarockschool.org) and Director of Programs of Mitrovica Rock School.

Complete all sections as relevant.

Date of report:

Date of incident:

How did you come to know about the incident (e.g., directly witnessed the event, informed by the survivor, informed by a third party)?

Please describe the incident:

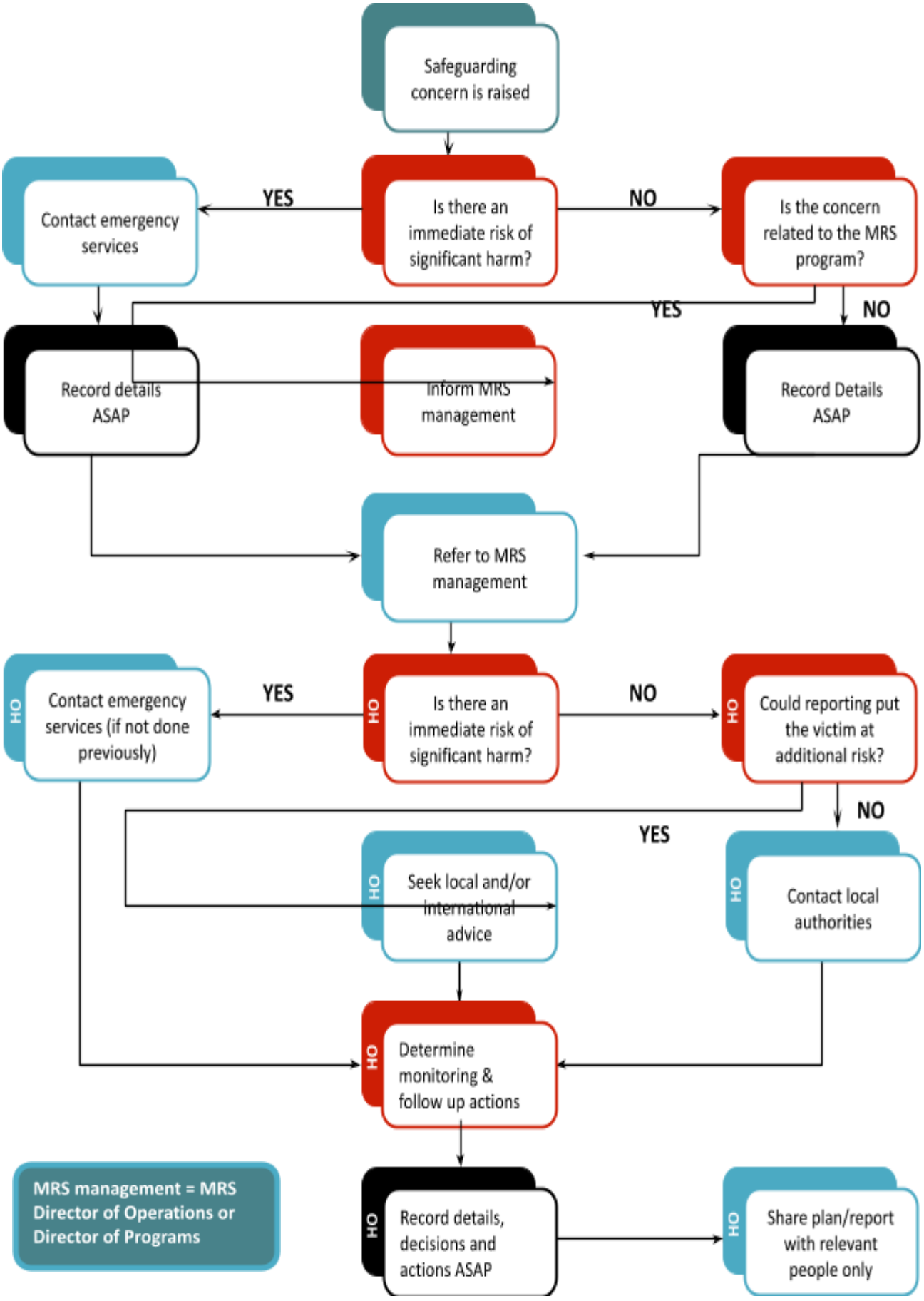
Describe any immediate action taken to ensure safety or treatment of those affected by the incident:

Next steps requested or suggested:

Incident report completed by:

Name: Job title:

Signature: Date:


Safeguarding concern is raised
Is there an immediate risk of significant harm?
YES
Contact emergency services
NO
Is the concern related to the MRS program?
YES
NO
Record details ASAP
Inform MRS management
Record Details ASAP
Refer to MRS management
HO
Is there an immediate risk of significant harm?
YES
Contact emergency services (if not done previously)
NO
Could reporting put the victim at additional risk?
YES
NO
Seek local and/or international advice
Contact local authorities
Determine monitoring & follow up actions
Record details, decisions and actions ASAP
Share plan/report with relevant people only
MRS management = MRS Director of Operations or Director of Programs

Mitrovica Rock School uses music to bridge divides between youth in North and South Mitrovica

We create safe environments where participants can explore and develop their creativity.

We believe that all people have the right to be protected from harm and act in their best interests at all times.

What is Abuse?
There are 6 main types of abuse:

We will not accept any form of abuse in our projects. We will also act when a participant discloses abuse that is happening outside of our projects, or when we notice external abuse that would be recognized by local law.

- treat all participants with respect, dignity and care
- encourage and maintain open communication between staff, volunteers and participants
- ensure that any form of physical contact is open and with participants' consent
- avoid spending time alone with participants. If it is necessary, ensure they can be seen by others.
- report all accidents, injuries, allegations and suspicions of abuse to the designated people ASAP
- not engage in abusive behavior or allow abuse to go unchallenged

