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**CONFIDENTIAL**

**CHECKLIST FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS AND SCHOOL COUNSELLORS TO  
RECOGNISE UNPLEASANT TREATMENT OCCURRING AT PRESCHOOL AND AT HOME**

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If you have any reason to assume that a child has been the target of mistreatment at (pre)school or at home, please go through this list with the child. Mistreatment can be defined as any action, physical or otherwise, that has a repressive or diminishing impact on others. Non-physical violence means for example creating an oppressive and unpleasant atmosphere or humorous rough play that makes a person feel uneasy.

Try to create a comfortable, secure situation in which you can be with the child without other persons present. You can find suggestions below on how to create a safe atmosphere for interaction. Let the child know that answering the questions is voluntary and she or he can end the discussion any time.

After discussing difficult topics, it is also important to discuss positive topics such as non-violence and safety, otherwise the conversation may leave the child feeling distressed. Concentrating on positives will map out the abilities and agency of the child.

While the aim is to create a safe and positive atmosphere, make sure you do not make promises you cannot keep, such as not telling anyone about the conversation.

At the end of the conversation, together with the child, summarise what he or she may have brought up as causing insecurity at home or at school and what he or she sees as creating safety. Tell the child what you think needs to be done to increase safety in his or her life and to support him or her in the best way possible. Also let the child know what you think would be the best way to proceed in the matter. If you have reason to suspect that a child has been target of violence at home, please consider making a child welfare announcement.



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### **Creating a safe and comfortable atmosphere:**

- Give the child your full attention.
- Avoid body language that might feel threatening to the child; sit on the child's level.
- Show your respect towards the child by having an understanding and accepting attitude.
- Be direct when asking the child questions, and use a warm, friendly tone throughout the conversation.
- Stay calm even if the child brings up difficult or surprising matters.
- Show that you believe the child. Passivity and not taking a stance on matters may make the child feel that you do not believe or take him or her seriously.
- Talk about the child's own resources and possibilities with him or her so as to further empower him or her.
- Make sure that the child knows that he or she can always come back and talk to you.

### **Discuss the sense of security at (pre)school and at home:**

#### **Do you feel safe at (pre)school? How about at home? Are you afraid or worried about something?**

*If the child says that he or she does not feel safe or is afraid or worried about something at (pre)school or at home, the following questions may help you to figure out the possible reasons. There are two clusters of questions: the first concerns (pre)school and the second home. **When discussing the topics, try to give concrete examples to ensure that the child understands.** The checklist includes examples that help you note the various nuanced and subtle ways of—for example—diminishing, so as to deepen the conversation. If you are worried about the child both at home and at (pre)school, please divide conversations into two or three meetings and make sure that each meeting ends with handling of positive situations.*

## **(PRE)SCHOOL**

- Do you have friends in your (pre)school group?                      yes                      no
- Do you have lots of fights in your group?                      yes                      no
- Is there someone in your (pre)school who makes you  
feel afraid or uneasy?                      yes                      no
- If yes, who and why (note that this person or these persons may also be a teacher or other  
staff member)?  

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- Is there any particular place in (pre)school you avoid spending time or going through  
because you feel uneasy or afraid?  

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- Has someone treated you in a way that has felt bad, that has for example made you feel  
smaller? If yes, who?  

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### **In what way you have been treated badly?**

*(Sign up for yourself on the basis of child' answer to the question above. Following questions are not meant to be asked separately)*

*Through social interaction, such as:*

name calling

ignoring the child or leaving him or her out of the group

irritation

saying unpleasant things about someone

malicious imitation

bossing others around

rough play that causes uneasiness or difficulties in concentrating

diminishing others hidden behind humour

controlling and or limiting the child's space, voice, or clothing  
yelling, blaming, and diminishing the child  
threats of being treated in an unpleasant manner  
ignoring the child and his or her needs  
pressure to play games the child would not like to play  
often having a negative role in games, play, or other activities  
hostile, aggressive silence  
extortion  
humour that makes the child feel uneasy

*In physical ways:*

pushing, hitting, kicking, or biting  
touching the child in a way that feels uncomfortable  
breaking or otherwise harming the child's things or shared property

*Adults in preschool:*

corporal punishment, for example hair-pulling, slapping  
humiliating the child  
touching in an inappropriate way  
ignoring the child's needs  
unreasonable demands, for example too much homework  
also, all of the things listed in the other sections above

*Via the internet and mobile phones (if the child uses them)*

diminishing or insulting texts or pictures on the internet  
leaving the child out of online groups such as Facebook, or ignoring him or her systematically  
disturbance via mobile phone, email, instant messaging

## **Marks of physical violence**

If the child has any marks of physical violence on his or her body or clothes, or if you have some other reason to assume that he or she is being physically abused, try to discover what has happened. You can use the following questions as a starting point for discussion.

- How did you get these injuries?
- Could you tell me what has happened to you?

## **Additional questions**

The following questions can also be asked and concern all the above-mentioned points.

- In what kind of situation do these things usually happen?
- How often have these things happened?
- What do other people do when they see what has happened to you?
- Is there any adult who knows about your situation?
- Have the adults done anything to help or support you?
- If yes, what?
- Has it helped?
- Can you think of anything I can do to help you feel better?

Notes

If the child has been treated in an unpleasant way by peers or a staff member at (pre)school, tell the child that you are happy that he or she told you because now you can support him or her and try to solve the situation. Contact the teacher of the child immediately—if the teacher is involved in violent acts, make sure that talking to him or her does not do any more harm to the child—and parents or other professionals in your network so as to intervene to prevent further violence (needs to be adjusted to the local context).

**Questions of non-violence and safety:**

- In which situations do you feel safe in (pre)school?
- Who can you speak to about your problems?
- How does this person or other people show that they care?
- How can you stand up for yourself without harming others?
- When do you feel happy?
- Tell me about some nice things that have happened in your life recently.

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## **PARENT or ADULTS or SIBLINGS AT HOME**

If the child is worried about something or is not feeling safe at home, try to discover the reasons by, for example, asking the following questions:

- Do you eat a meal in the afternoon or in the evening at home?
- Who takes care of you if you are ill?
- Are you often at home without your parents?
- When do you go to sleep?
- Do you often have bad dreams?
- How often do you shower or take a bath and brush your teeth?
- Who can you talk to if you are worried about something?

Following questions are related to threat of violence. You do not have to necessarily ask every question, you can write your notes based on the child's story.

- Can you tell me about situations when you haven't felt safe?
- Are you afraid of something at home?
- Is there something happening at home that makes you worried?

Someone is pushing, hitting, or kicking the child at home. Who? \_\_\_\_\_

Someone is pushing, hitting, or kicking one of the guardians or parents at home.

Who? \_\_\_\_\_

The child is threatened with violence. By whom? \_\_\_\_\_

One of the guardians is threatened with violence. By whom? \_\_\_\_\_

There is constant yelling, blaming, and diminishing of the child. By whom? \_\_\_\_\_

There is constant yelling, blaming, and diminishing of one of the guardians. By whom? \_\_\_\_\_

The child's needs are neglected.

The child has been left alone without care for a long period of time.

The child has been touched in a way that feels uncomfortable. By whom? \_\_\_\_\_

Unreasonable demands are being made of the child.

There is corporal punishment, such as pulling of the child's hair. By whom? \_\_\_\_\_

The atmosphere at home is oppressive.

Someone is being silent in a hostile, aggressive manner. Who? \_\_\_\_\_

- Something else:

- Do these kind of things happen somewhere else apart from at home or (pre)school?
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### **Follow-up questions**

- In what kind of situation do these things usually happen? When and where do they usually happen?
- How often have these things happened?
- What do other people do if they see what happens or has happened to you or to someone else in your family?
- Is there any adult who knows about this?
- Has he or she done anything to help you? If yes, what?
- Did it help?
- How would you like me to help you?

### **Questions related to safety and wellbeing at home:**

- When do you feel safe and happy at home?
- Do you have other places where you feel happy and safe?
- Do you have caring adults in your life? Who?
- How do or could they help you?
- Tell me about some nice things or events you have had at home or in other places in your life.

Notes

If you have reasons to suspect that the child's basic security needs have not been answered or that he or she is facing violence at home, please contact a child welfare team or social workers. Tell the child that you will support and try to help him or her and his or her family and that it was important that he or she talked about these things with you.

CHILD'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

A SUMMARY OF THE ISSUES THAT ARE THREATENING THE CHILD'S SAFETY AT  
(PRE)SCHOOL OR AT HOME:

A SUMMARY OF RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT THE CHILD'S SAFETY:

POSSIBLE FURTHER MEASURES:

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: \_\_\_\_\_

TIME, PLACE, AND NAME OR SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_