Child Protection Policy of TÁRKI Social Research Institute

Our commitment

TÁRKI Social Research Institute respects the rights of every child it works with, meets or affects through its work. We follow the highest professional standards in our research projects, and we pay particularly careful attention when we work with vulnerable groups, such as children.

Our Child Protection Policy follows the standards of Keeping Children Safe's International Child Safeguarding Standards and the UNCRC.

Who does this policy apply to?
Everyone who works for or with us: TÁRKI staff, volunteers, board members, interns, interviewers and partners who act on our behalf. It applies to all our research projects.

Who is a child?
A child means every human being below the age of 18 years.

Our child protection focal point. Orsolya Szabó (international project coordinator, +36-30-351-39-94, szabo@tarki.hu) is responsible for this policy and receives all concerns. In their absence, contact Judit Rácz (data collection project manager, +36-30-923-37-56, racz@tarki.hu). The person responsible reports to the director of TÁRKI Social Research Institute or the relevant authority.

Our main child protection principles

1) All children have equal rights to protection from harm
2) Everybody has a responsibility to support the protection of children
3) Organizations have a duty of care to children with whom they work, are in contact with, or who are affected by their work and operations
4) If organizations work with partners, they have a responsibility to help partners meet the minimum requirements on protection
5) All actions on child safeguarding are taken in the best interests of the child, which are paramount.

Our main safeguarding standards

1) **Informed consent**. Children cannot be involved in research unless the informed consent is signed by their parent or guardian. In addition, the child should express verbal consent after being informed about the research and understanding the voluntary participation in it. In case the research requires voice- or video recording or pictures, it should be clearly explained in the consent form to the parties involved, including the use of such materials.
2) **Voluntary participation**. Children may only participate in research projects if their participation is voluntary. They have the right to quit the questionnaire, focus group or interview any time even if they had agreed to participate.
3) **Never alone**. Children cannot be interviewed by a researcher alone. Another trusted adult should be present at least within sight.
4) **Child-friendly atmosphere and language**. The child should feel safe in the environment of the interview/survey room and the language of the research should be tailored to the cognitive development of the child. The goal is to involve the child and make the process interesting for them.
5) **Contact**. Children cannot be contacted directly through online messages, by phone or other means. If a researcher meets a child, it should be arranged between the parent/guardian and the researcher.
6) **Staff preparation and selection**. Everyone working at TÁRKI or on behalf of TÁRKI should get familiar with the Child Protection Policy. It is the responsibility of the management that all staff members are duly informed about the standards and measures to take in case of the violation of rights or abuse of children. Every job or volunteer description that involves contact with children mentions this policy. We ask for references. Everyone who could be in direct contact with children should show a criminal record check and read this policy before they start. Besides getting familiar with this policy, staff should complete an introductory course on child protection issues, prepared by TÁRKI in cooperation with local child protection experts.

Risks and measures

TÁRKI staff may get in contact with children during its research projects, during interviews, focus groups or surveys. Hereby we list the most important risks we identified that might arise during these procedures.

Risks	Measures to address them
Parents/guardians do not know that their child participates in research.	A child cannot participate in research without the signed informed consent of their parent/guardian. The informed consent should include the subject, the length, and the place of the interview (or focus group, survey), the interviewer's name and phone number and every measure to protect personal data of the child and the parents/guardians. These consents should be collected and stored in secure software only accessible to the researchers involved in the project. All personal data should be deleted by the end of the project.
A child participates in research but does not feel comfortable with the adult interviewer.	During the research the child should feel safe and comfortable and therefore participation should be voluntary and it is forbidden to interview a child alone. Either their parent, guardian or other trusted adult should be present during the interview/focus group/survey or at least within sight. People present at the research with a child should be recorded and stored in secure software.
A child participates in the research but does not understand the questions or get bored during the interview.	Interview, survey or focus group questions should be child-friendly and should consider their age or cognitive development stage. We always aim to keep the interview, the survey and the focus group discussions as short as possible.
A child is being harmed during an interview (including physical, sexual, negligent treatment or emotional abuse).	Staff members of TÁRKI should report the abuse or harm immediately to the relevant authority: either to the local Family and Child Welfare Services (or Protection Services) or directly to the Police. The case should be kept confidential. As mentioned above, a child cannot be interviewed alone by a researcher of TÁRKI.
Personal data of children falls into the possession of unauthorized persons.	Personal data of children should be collected and stored according to the

	highest data protection standards, in a secure software of TÁRKI. Collected data on children should only be available to the researchers involved in the project and should be deleted immediately by the end of the project. Further data protection policy details of TÁRKI are available HERE.
A child protection case is uncovered during an interview with a child.	In case a child protection case is revealed during an interview, the researcher should immediately report it to the local Family and Child Welfare Services (or Protection Services) or directly to the Police. The case should be kept confidential. It is forbidden to start a personal investigation or to promise a child to keep a secret.

Reporting and Incident Handling

Child protection related issues should be reported to the child protection focal point of TÁRKI, Orsolya Szabó (international project coordinator, +36-30-351-39-94, szabo@tarki.hu). In their absence, the deputy, Judit Rácz (data collection project manager, +36-30-923-37-56, racz@tarki.hu) should be notified. In case the issue concerns the focal point, the deputy should be notified and she should report it to the CEO of TÁRKI.

Handling a child protection incident requires 3 main principles:

1) Immediate action. The case should be prioritized and must be reported immediately, within 24 hours to the child protection focal point of TÁRKI (or her deputy - see above). The focal point must record the case in the database only accessible to her. The deputy and the CEO can request access to the database in case they have to take action. After the administration, the case should be immediately reported to the local Family and Child Protection Services or the Police (112).
2) Safety first. In case the child is in danger, immediately contact the Police (112).
3) Listen to the child without judgement and never promise to keep a secret. Do not judge anyone involved. Keep the case confidential but never promise the child that you can keep a secret. Children must be informed clearly, according to their cognitive development, what kind of actions you will take.

Accountability: checking that it works

- **The management is responsible** for this policy and makes sure there is time and money to apply it.
- **The policy is reviewed** every two years, or sooner after a serious incident or a change in the law.
- **The policy is public.** It is on our website, and we explain it to children and families in plain words. Our partners receive a copy.

Adoption

Adopted by TÁRKI Social Research Institute on 29/10/2026.
Next review: 29/10/2028.



András Gábos
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TÁRKI Social Research Institute