**SECURITY POLICY TEMPLATE FOR A SHELTER OR SAFE HOUSE FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURVIVORS**

**1. Purpose**

This policy aims to ensure the safety, privacy, and well-being of survivors residing in the shelter while maintaining a secure and supportive environment. It outlines protocols for access, data protection, communication, and safeguarding.

**2. Guiding Principles**

* **Survivor-Centered Approach:** Prioritize the rights, needs, and wishes of survivors while fostering empowerment.
* **Confidentiality:** Protect all personal and sensitive information from unauthorized access or disclosure.
* **Do No Harm:** Ensure all actions and protocols promote the safety and well-being of survivors without exposing them to further harm.
* **Inclusivity:** Address the needs of diverse groups, including children, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and other vulnerable populations.

**3. Shelter Security Measures**

**Physical Security**

Keeping the shelter's location confidential is crucial to ensuring the safety and privacy of survivors. To create a secure environment, the shelter is equipped with perimeter fencing, CCTV cameras, and 24-hour surveillance. Entry points are tightly controlled, allowing only authorized staff, residents, and approved visitors access. These measures are in place to provide survivors with a safe and peaceful space where they can focus on healing without fear.

**Access Protocols**

Maintaining strict access protocols helps to protect the privacy and security of everyone at the shelter. Visitors are welcome only with prior approval and are always supervised during their stay. Staff and volunteers go through careful background checks to ensure they are committed to supporting survivors in a safe and ethical way. Additionally, everyone working at the shelter signs confidentiality agreements to protect the sensitive information of residents and the shelter's operations.

**Emergency Protocols**

Being prepared for emergencies is a vital part of keeping everyone safe. Clear evacuation procedures are in place to ensure residents and staff know exactly what to do if a threat arises. The shelter also works closely with local law enforcement to ensure a swift response to any security breaches, giving survivors the reassurance that their safety is always a priority.

**4. Phone Use and Data Protection**

**Phone Use**

Survivors are permitted to use their personal phones in designated areas within the shelter. However, it is essential that they follow the shelter's privacy guidelines to ensure everyone's safety. To maintain confidentiality, the use of cameras and recording devices is strictly prohibited unless explicitly authorized by shelter management for specific purposes. Survivors are encouraged to avoid sharing the shelter's location, personal details, or any identifying information on social media. This precaution is vital in safeguarding their safety and ensuring the confidentiality of the shelter.

**Data Protection**

Protecting survivors’ personal information is a fundamental priority. All records, whether physical or electronic, are securely stored with access limited to authorized personnel. Survivors’ information will only be shared with their informed consent, except in cases where disclosure is legally required to prevent harm. To uphold these standards, all staff receive regular training on data protection and cybersecurity measures. These efforts ensure that sensitive information remains secure and survivors’ trust in the shelter is upheld.

**5. Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**

**Child-Specific Safeguards**

Children residing in the shelter deserve a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment. To ensure this, the shelter provides designated child-friendly spaces where children can feel secure and comfortable. Activities and programs tailored to their developmental needs are organized regularly to promote learning, play, and healing. Additionally, all staff interacting with children receive specialized training in child protection and positive reinforcement techniques, equipping them to handle the unique needs of young residents with sensitivity and care.

**Preventing Abuse and Exploitation**

The safety and well-being of all residents, especially children, is paramount. To prevent exploitation or abuse, the shelter enforces a strict code of conduct for all staff and volunteers. This includes clear guidelines on appropriate behavior and professional boundaries. Any suspicion or evidence of abuse is taken seriously, with robust reporting mechanisms in place to ensure such concerns are addressed promptly. Whistleblowers are guaranteed protection, fostering an environment where accountability is upheld, and safety is prioritized.

**Parental/Guardian Oversight**

Parents or guardians play a crucial role in their children's well-being while in the shelter unless the abuser/perpetrator is a parent. They are expected to visit the children when it is safe for them to do so. To further support families, the shelter shall provide counseling and education on trauma-informed care, empowering parents with tools to help their children heal and thrive.

**6. Survivor Safeguarding Policy**

**Confidentiality Measures**

Maintaining the confidentiality of survivors is essential to their safety and trust. Identifiable information about survivors must never be used in external discussions or communications. All records and communications are securely stored, with access limited to authorized personnel. These measures ensure that survivors' privacy is protected and their dignity respected.

**Survivor Autonomy**

Empowering survivors is at the heart of the shelter’s mission. Survivors are actively involved in creating their safety and care plans, enabling them to make informed decisions about their well-being. The shelter also respects each survivor’s cultural, gender, and religious preferences while aligning with safety and security standards to ensure a respectful and inclusive environment.

**7. Monitoring and Evaluation Policy**

Regular monitoring and evaluation ensure the shelter's policies and practices remain effective and relevant. Security measures, data protection protocols, and staff compliance with safeguarding policies are audited routinely to identify areas for improvement. Survivors are encouraged to share feedback anonymously through designated channels, ensuring their voices guide policy refinement. Additionally, the shelter’s policies are reviewed and updated annually to address emerging challenges and incorporate best practices, ensuring continuous improvement in the quality of care and protection providers.