

Introduction to Child Protection

Introduction to Child Protection

Key concepts, legal framework, and practical approaches for safeguarding children.

1. What Is Child Protection?

Aspect	Description
Definition	Actions, policies, and services that prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against children.
Goal	Ensure every child grows up safe, healthy, and with their rights respected.
Scope	Includes physical, emotional, sexual abuse; neglect; child labour; trafficking; online exploitation; and harmful cultural practices.

2. Core Principles

Principle	Explanation
Best Interests of the Child	All decisions must prioritize the child's safety, development, and wellbeing.
Non-Discrimination	Protection services must be accessible to every child, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, or socio-economic status.
Right to Participation	Children should be heard and involved in matters affecting them, in an age-appropriate way.
Accountability	Institutions and individuals are responsible for preventing and responding to harm.
Prevention & Early Intervention	Focus on risk-reduction strategies before abuse occurs.

3. Legal & Policy Framework

Level	Key Instruments

Introduction to Child Protection

International	• UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
	• Optional Protocols on child soldiers, sale of children, and on a communications procedure
	• Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 (end violence against children)
Regional	• African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
	• European Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention)
National	• Child Protection Laws (e.g., Children Act, Child Welfare Acts)
	• Mandatory reporting statutes
	• Family courts and juvenile justice codes
Sectoral Policies	• Education: Safe Schools policies
	• Health: Child-friendly health services
	• Social Services: Foster care, adoption, and family support guidelines

4. Types of Child Abuse & Neglect

Category	Signs & Indicators
Physical Abuse	Unexplained bruises, burns, fractures; fear of adults; flinching when touched.
Emotional/ Psychological Abuse	Extreme withdrawal, anxiety, low self-esteem, developmental delays; frequent criticism or humiliation.
Sexual Abuse	Inappropriate sexual behavior, knowledge beyond age level, genital injuries, STIs, pregnancy in adolescents.
Neglect	Poor hygiene, malnutrition, unattended medical needs, lack of supervision, inadequate clothing or shelter.
Exploitation	Child labour, trafficking, forced marriage, online grooming, involvement in criminal activities.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

Stakeholder	Primary Responsibilities
Parents / Caregivers	Provide safe environment, nurture, monitor, and report concerns.

Introduction to Child Protection

Stakeholder

Primary Responsibilities

Teachers & School Staff	Observe and document changes, implement safeguarding policies, report suspected abuse.
Health Professionals	Conduct routine screening, document injuries, refer to child protection services.
Social Workers	Assess risk, develop safety plans, coordinate services, monitor outcomes.
Law Enforcement	Investigate allegations, protect victims, prosecute perpetrators.
Community Leaders / NGOs	Raise awareness, offer support services, advocate for policy reforms.

6. The Child Protection Process

1. **Identification** – Recognize signs of abuse/