

GOA SCPCR ISSUES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENFORCEMENT OF POCSO ACT, 2012

November 29, 2023

Goa State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (GSCPCR) has issued amendments to the existing circular on POCSO by Directorate of Education after consultation with stakeholders in Child Protection System.

GSCPCR has stated that, Under Section 44 Rule 6 of the POCSO Act, 2012, the Commission is solely empowered, in addition to the functions assigned to it under the Act, to monitor the provisions of the Act.

GSCPCR in its press note stated that, the alarming rise in sexual assaults on children in Goa, within the premises of schools and no action or delayed action, being reported in schools, are distressing incidents that highlight the urgent need for comprehensive measures to tackle this pervasive issue. The students in schools who are focused on learning, growing, and building their futures, are instead subjected to appalling acts of violence and trauma. There is outright abuse of power and trust that both the child and the parents put in the school and those working in any capacity within these schools.

It is imperative that Directorate of Education acknowledge the gravity of the problem, confront the harsh reality, and direct the school authorities to act decisively and quickly when faced with a complaint of child sexual abuse, to ensure the safety and well-being of the children.

In order to make schools a safer place for children and implementing the act in its true letter and spirit GSCPCR has suggested that, teaching and non-teaching staff, management, contractual staff, personnel engaged for an extra-curricular activity, management, volunteers, NGOs associated with the school, etc must be aware of the provision of section 19 and section 21 of the POCSO Act 2012 as well as the Provision of Sexual Harassment at Workplace 2013.

In case of any child reporting an incident of sexual abuse the same should be immediately reported to the counselor to provide psychosocial, emotional support to the child victim.

The counselors appointed under Goa Education Development Corporation shall be duty bound to cooperate and assist every child who report about any incident of child sexual abuse. If the incident of sexual abuse is directly mentioned to the counselor, the counselor is duty bound to report in writing the said incident to the Police Station under intimation to the headmaster of the Institution.

In case there is no counselor at the school, the incident narrated by the child shall be given in writing by the teacher to the headmaster/in charge of the school, who shall then forward the same to the Police for the purpose of investigation.

Intimation to the Police should be done immediately by the headmaster of the school not beyond 12 hours after receiving the information.

“Internal Complaints Committee” nor “Vishaka Committee” constituted under the Sexual Harassment of the Women at the Workplace (POSH) 2013, nor the School Management Committee shall have the right to deal with cases/ allegation of child sexual abuse.

It will be the duty of every headmaster to take the necessary steps mandated under the POCSO Act, 2012 and intimate the department of steps taken immediately not beyond 24 hrs.

Intimation shall also be given to District Child Protection Unit of the district which can provide additional psycho-social, legal, and rehabilitative support to the child and to Goa State Commission for Protection of Child Rights which has the mandate to monitor the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.

GSCPCR has also suggested proactive measures to prevent child sexual abuse such as installation CCTV cameras, warning signs, in strategic areas of Institutions.

Establish and strategically place safety boxes to receive complaints around the school, away from CCTV surveillance. These should be manned and reviewed periodically by the District Child Protection Unit and law enforcement agencies in the jurisdiction of the school.

Observe mandatorily Child Abuse Prevention Week ([November 14 – November 20](#)) annually through awareness programs for all staff of the school and submit a compliance report with supporting documentation to Directorate of Education.

All members of the teaching and non-teaching staff, management, including contractual staff, personnel engaged for an extra-curricular activity, management, volunteers, NGOs associated with the school, etc must mandatorily complete an annual orientation on sexual offences defined under POCSO Act 2012 and a compliance report sent to the Directorate of Education.

DI/NB/AXP/UB/GD/2023/ 2068

Issued by the Department of Information & Publicity

Department of Information & Publicity,

Government of Goa,

Udyog Bhavan, Third Floor,

Near Azad Maidan, Panaji – Goa.