

**ATENEDE DE ILOILO
SANTA MARIA CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAM AND POLICIES

A. RATIONALE

Article 15, Section 3 (2) of the Philippine Constitution upholds “the right of children to assistance, including proper care and nutrition, and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation, and other conditions prejudicial to their development.” This is supported by R.A. 7610, an act providing for stronger deterrence and special protection against child abuse, exploitation, and discrimination.

Likewise, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

In the same light, the Family Code of the Philippines, by way of the principle of *in loco parentis*, gives the school, its administrators and teachers the special parental authority and responsibility over the minor child while under their supervision, instruction, or custody. More recently, Republic Act 10627 or the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013 was enacted to ensure that all schools provide a conducive and safe learning environment for children,

As a Jesuit, Catholic educational institution, Ateneo de Iloilo – Santa Maria Catholic School seeks to form men and women who manifest concern and care for others. The school, through programs initiated and services provided, takes seriously its responsibility to protect and promote the welfare of children and young people under its care. *Cura personalis* (care of persons), a constitutive element in Jesuit education, emphasizes personal care for individuals, with distinct respect for each student’s unique circumstances and concerns.

Consequently, the school strongly supports the DepEd’s **zero tolerance policy** for any act of child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, bullying and other forms of abuse. It is towards this end that the Ateneo de Iloilo Child Protection Program and Policies has been formulated.

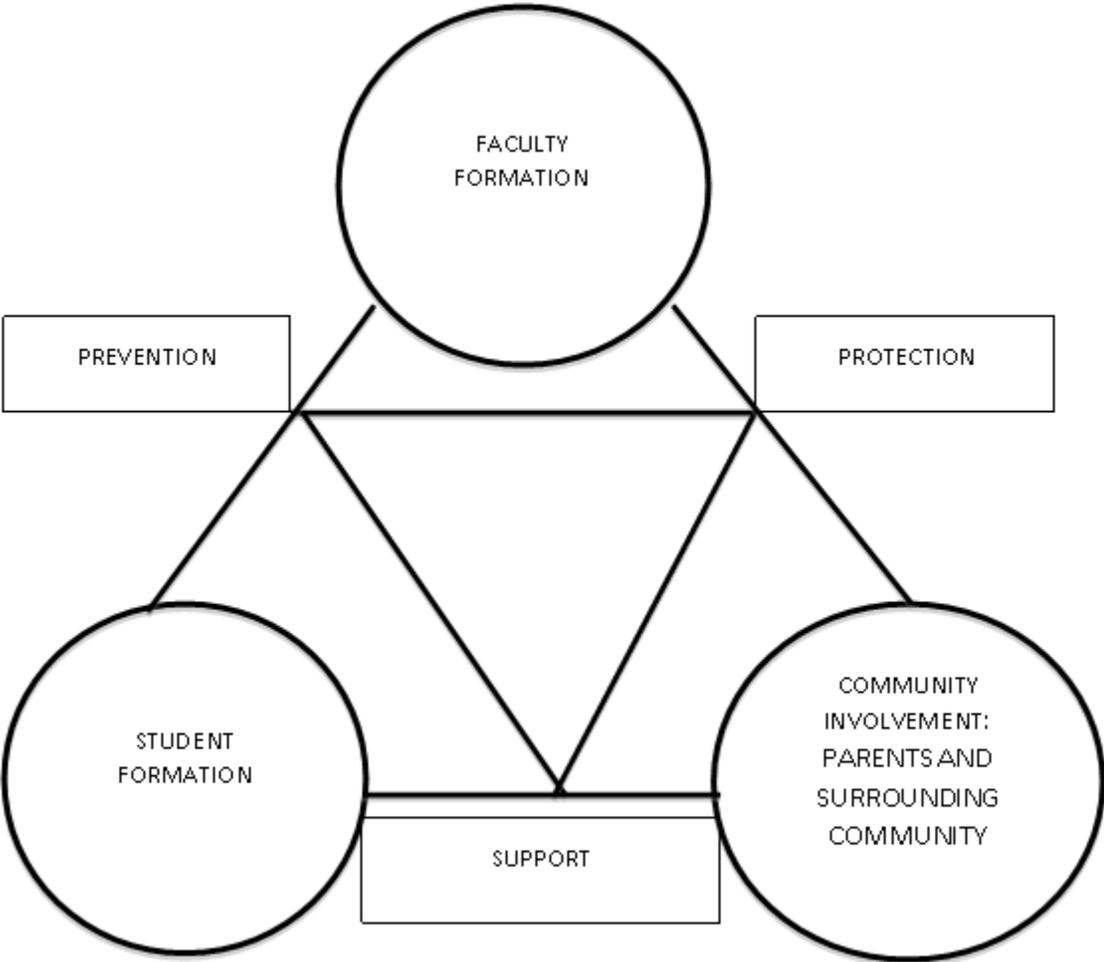
B. OBJECTIVES

This program aims to:

1. empower the students by including in the curriculum activities that would develop their self-esteem, self-confidence, assertiveness, and self-protective skills;
2. include in the faculty training program capacity building activities for school personnel that would develop a more proactive stance toward ensuring a safe, free-from-fear and healthy learning environment for the students;
3. inform and involve parents by raising their level of awareness on the significance of their role in protecting their children against various forms of abuses; and
4. ensure that, whenever possible, effective working relationships and coordination are constantly maintained between the school and the community/ concerned agencies.

C. MAIN THRUSTS OF THE PROGRAM

1. PREVENTION. All members of the community shall work collaboratively to provide a positive school atmosphere and exhaust measures to prevent possible hazards of child protection through proper information dissemination.
2. PROTECTION. There shall be consistent implementation of agreed and common procedures, ensuring first that the school personnel are trained to respond appropriately, and parents and the surrounding community resources are tapped to assist in child protection concerns.
3. SUPPORT. The school community shall readily provide appropriate emotional and spiritual support to students who may be victims of any form of abuse or violence.



D. FRAMEWORK OF THE CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAM

The Child Protection Program ensures the involvement of the different community sectors particularly the students, teachers and staff, school administration, Parent-Teacher Associations, and the officials and members of the local units (barangays). Through consultative and collaborative working efforts, the program assures the school constituents its preventive measures, protection and support from the community as regards to child protection and safety.

E. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE (CPC)

The school has established the Child Protection Committee (CPC) that shall work closely with existing concerned offices in:

1. drafting policies and plans to ensure child protection and safety, which shall be reviewed every three (3) years;
2. initiating information dissemination programs and organizing capacity-building activities for the different school sectors;
3. developing and implementing a school-based referral and monitoring system in response to identifying students who may be suffering from significant harm from others;
4. ensuring that the children's right to be heard is respected and upheld in all matter and procedures affecting their welfare; and
5. closely coordinating with government agencies and non-governmental organizations as may be appropriate.

F. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The operative definition of terms and description of the different violations such as **child abuse, discrimination against children, child exploitation, violence against children committed in schools, bullying or peer abuse, other acts of abuse by a pupil, student or learner, corporal punishment, and, positive and non-violent discipline of children**, shall be based on RA 10627 or the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013.

G. PREVENTIVE MEASURES

1. The school shall build the capacities of school personnel, students, parents and guardians to understand and deal with child abuse and other forms of violence by conducting sessions, trainings and seminars on positive peer relationships and enhancement of social and emotional competence.

2. School activities shall be conducted to raise awareness on children's rights, corporal punishment and positive discipline, fostering the active involvement of and providing venues for bringing together parents, families and children.
3. The Student Handbook and the Faculty and Administrative Manual shall serve as the code of conduct for students and school personnel to ensure child protection and policy.
4. The school shall closely tie up with the Barangay Council of the nearby local government units in response to providing a safe environment for its constituents and for monitoring of possible forms of abuses and violence that might take place in the vicinity.
5. The Barangay Council for Protection of Children Guidelines shall be implemented to ensure the safety and protection of the students in the surrounding areas of the barangay.

H. PROCEDURES IN CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

1. Upon the filing of a complaint of any party or upon notice by school personnel of any bullying or peer abuse incident, the same shall be reported to the Prefect of Discipline (POD), who shall conduct verification with the complainant and the person/s involved (witnesses included).
2. If data/information gathered confirms such an incident, the POD shall inform the parents or guardian of the victim and the offending child in a special conference called for this purpose.
3. Depending on the gravity of the bullying committed by the student, the school may impose other non-punitive measures in accordance with the principles of Positive and Non-violent Discipline. The victim and the offending child shall be referred to the Guidance/Campus Ministry for processing and interventions.
4. Cases warranting reprimand or minor sanctions (jug/post/detention) based on the policies stipulated in the Student Handbook shall be decided upon by the POD.
5. In all cases where the imposable penalty on the offending child is suspension, exclusion or expulsion, the following minimum requirements of due process shall be complied with:

1. The child and the parents or guardians must be informed of the complaint in writing.
2. The child shall be given the opportunity to answer the complaint in writing, with the assistance of the parents or guardians, who shall note the letter of the child.
3. The child and his/her parents are invited to attend the disciplinary board meeting and explain his/her side. In cases where the parents are unavailable, the guardian will accompany the child on their behalf.
4. The disciplinary board will deliberate on the merits of the case. It makes the final decision in cases of suspension and recommends to the President cases of exclusion/dismissal.
5. A student, who has been given a sanction, especially exclusion, has the right to appeal. The written appeal should be addressed to the School President within one week after the receipt of the decision.
6. If the bullying or peer abuse resulted in serious physical injuries or death, whenever appropriate, the case shall be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of Republic Act 9344 (Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

(see Appendix A)

I. COMPLAINTS AGAINST SCHOOL PERSONNEL/OFFICIAL

1. Part of the school's capacity-building program for students is empowering them to report any complaint for child abuse, violence, exploitation, or discrimination to a trusted school personnel, who shall assist the child in filing a complaint to the Principal.
2. If the complaint warrants further investigation, the case shall be forwarded to the Personnel Officer who will form a committee to investigate on the complaint not later than 72 hours upon submission.
3. The concerned individual shall be informed of the complaint and be asked to submit a written explanation within 48 hours from the receipt thereof. Should he/she fail to submit the written explanation within the prescribed period of time, the investigating committee shall proceed with its investigation even in the absence of such document.
4. The concerned personnel shall be invited to attend the committee hearing to explain his/her side of the matter.
5. The fact-finding committee submits the result of the investigation and recommends sanctions, whenever applicable, to the School President pursuant to the provisions of the Faculty and Administrative Manual.
6. Final decision on the case shall be made by the School President.
7. A written appeal addressed to the School President may be done within one week after the

receipt of the decision.

8. The administrative case shall be without prejudice to any civil or criminal case that may be filed.
9. The school shall submit the report to the Division Office after each school year with proper discretion and confidentiality.

(see Appendix B)

J. JURISDICTION

1. Complaints of child abuse, violence, discrimination, exploitation, bullying and other acts of abuse under RA 10627 shall be within the exclusive jurisdiction of the school and the DepEd, and shall not be brought for amicable settlement before the barangay, subject to existing laws, rules and regulations.
2. Complaints for acts committed by persons not under the jurisdiction of the school shall be referred to the appropriate authorities.

K. REFERRAL AND ASSESSMENT OF VICTIMS AND OFFENDERS AND OTHER CHILDREN

1. In cases involving child abuse, violence, discrimination, exploitation, and other acts of abuse occurring within its jurisdiction, the school shall take appropriate steps to prevent further threats and harm on the child. School authorities shall immediately remove the victim, or in appropriate cases, the offender, from the place of the incident, if the former is determined to be at risk. The child's family shall be informed of any action taken.
2. The school, in appropriate cases, shall decide on matter that would be of best interest and welfare of the victim and his or her family. It may refer the victims and offenders (if minor) to the office of Department of Social Welfare and Development or other agencies for assessment in which appropriate intervention can be applied.
3. Likewise, the school may refer to appropriate agencies students who are victims of abuse at home, children at risk, children with special needs or at risk, children facing difficult situations or those who are exhibiting aggressive behavior, with a view to obtaining professional assessment, interventions and assistance from competent service providers.

(see Appendix C)

L. CONFIDENTIALITY

In child abuse, violence, discrimination, exploitation, bullying or peer abuse and other acts of abuse by a student, the identity or other information that may reasonably identify the student, whether victim or offender, shall be withheld from the public to protect his or her privacy.

M. CRIMINAL AND CIVIL LIABILITY

Criminal and civil liability arising from child abuse, discrimination, exploitation and other acts of abuse are separate and distinct, and shall not be a bar to the filing of an administrative case under these guidelines