

Russian Federation

Information provided further the statement by the Lanzarote Committee Chair and Vice-Chairperson on stepping up protection of children against sexual exploitation and abuse in times of the COVID-19 pandemic

The Russian Federation has set forth comprehensive measures to protect and support children and adolescents in times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is crucial to emphasize that Russian authorities undertake counteraction and preventive activities against child's sexual abuse as part of far-reaching steps aiming at comprehensive protection of children, their physical health, psychological support of minors and their parents.

In the Russian Federation complex interservice work including normative, administrative, practical, organizational and law measures was organized to ensure complex protection of minors during the epidemic.

The Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation issued Order No. 104 dated March 17th, 2020, *"On organization of educational activities at institutions that run educational programs of primary, basic, general and secondary general education, educational programs of secondary professional education, further general and professional educational programs, within the spread of new coronavirus infection on the territory of the Russian Federation"*: <https://docs.edu.gov.ru/document/750dd535d2c38b2a15cd47c9ea44086e/download/2751/>

The order outlines a strong requirement to ensure educational programs full-scale implementation in digital environment (clause 1.3.) as well as emphasizes a critical necessity to follow up educative tasks that aim at personality's development, socialization of children based on socio-cultural, spiritual and moral values, norms of behaviour in the interests of the man, family, society, and nation (clause 1.4.).

In addition, on April 1st, 2020, the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation launched a series of expert consultations for parents on children's online activities in the context of coronavirus and self-isolation regime, which involves the use of distant technologies for education and socialization: *Children and the Web: 5 Parental Myths about the Internet* <https://docs.edu.gov.ru/document/40e44943fa007083b068081b8394e114/>

Recommendations were elaborated in order to help parents protect children from bullying, sexual abuse and pressure on the Web.

Russian regions have received guidelines from the Ministry on temporary transfer of children from institutions for orphans and children left without parental care to the Russian citizens' families due to unfavourable sanitary and epidemiological situation caused by the spread of coronavirus infection COVID-19 and with the aim to ensure children's safety and security.

The Russian Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing (Rospotrebnadzor) has developed special recommendations for parents to help protect from coronavirus. These recommendations have been published on the agency website:

https://www.rospotrebnadzor.ru/about/info/news/news_details.php?ELEMENT_ID=14129

In particular, it is recommended to limit children's contacts not only with peers but even more with outsiders, to ensure compliance with the self-isolation regime.

At the same time distant learning has been provided not only for educational but also for awareness-raising and outreach activities (preparation for school exams, virtual excursions, performances, etc.).

Such activities are implemented across the Russian Federation public entities, see, for instance, the *data related to the Moscow region*:

<https://mosreg.ru/sobytiya/obzory/obrazovanie-v-podmoskove-v-period-samoizolyacii-onlain-aktivnosti-i-dezhurnye-gruppy>

In the framework of specific measures of state social policy for those children whose parents continue to work during this period, standby groups operate in kindergartens and elementary schools. See, for example, the following information:

Yekaterinburg <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJBZ2YIfzRU>

Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug – Ugra

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXmBWKTf9Xs>

In terms of law enforcement, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation pays special attention to proactive measures of protection and preventive work with minors.

As part of scientific and applied activities of the relevant specialized organizations, recommendations are developed for parents on psychological aspects of interaction with children in conditions of self-isolation.

See, for instance, an example from Udmurtia:

<http://xn--80aikabba4avndeqflcz9p.xn--p1ai/roditeli-poderzhite-podrostkov-v-usloviyax-samoizolyacii/>

A range of all-Russian webinars for parents has been launched.

For instance, the Federal State Budgetary Institution *Center for the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children* (Moscow) has set forth following resources:

Games and toys for young children; Nature of key psychological problems. Model of parenting and parental mistakes; Effective organization of teenager's educational activities through preparation for exams at home; Features of adolescence in terms of psychology, sociology, and ethology: adolescent deviance; Eight rules for safe communication with adolescents: how parents respond to "difficult" child behaviour; How to organize joint play activities of parents

with children from 1 to 13 years old at their apartments; Dialogue of a teenager with parents: simple conversation on complex topics: <https://fcprc.ru/news/vebinary-dlya-pedagogov-spetsialistov-roditelej-i-podrostkov/>

Regional experience can be estimated with regard to Kemerovo region as an example.

Despite the unfavourable epidemiological situation, checks on complaints and reports of crimes against minors in the region are carried out within the time period specified by the legislation of the Russian Federation and in the presence of both legal representatives and specialists of the forensic psychologists department of the state educational organization *Kuzbass Regional Center for Psychological, Pedagogical, Medical and Social Assistance "Health and Personal Development"* (hereinafter referred to as the Center).

It should be noted that the call of the minor and his/her legal representatives takes place only if it does not affect their state of health, and interrogation is an urgent investigative action.

Protection of children's interests is carried out due to a well-functioning system of interagency cooperation among the Center, police departments, employees of the juvenile affairs department, investigators of the Investigative Committee for Kemerovo region.

Along with minors' support during investigative actions, the Center specialists conduct active work to prevent minors' unauthorized escape from orphanages. During the situation of high emergency such cases have not been recorded.

At the same time distant learning has been launched to immerse children not only for educational but also for awareness-raising psychological and volunteer activities (*peer educates peer*):

- Rules of procedure in high emergency conditions; How to establish contact with parents during self-isolation.

* * *

Responses to specific questions by the Bureau of the Lanzarote Committee on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

- 1. To what extent, if at all, has the threat of child sexual abuse/exploitation changed due to COVID-19? If so:**
 - Please tell us about whether the level of risk has increased/decreased/remained the same and if possible specify this with regard to the various types of sexual offences against children (Articles 18-23 of the Convention);

- You may also wish to indicate any emerging trends relating to child sexual abuse/exploitation, as the result of COVID-19, and point at measures taken to address them.

No information received.

2. Did lockdown cause child sexual abuse/exploitation cases (identified/reported) to increase, decrease or stay the same? Please submit data (number of victims/offenders) and highlight what you think may explain the trend.

No information received.

3. Please also tell us whether and how general child safeguarding measures were, or are likely to be, affected by measures taken by governments in response to COVID-19. In addition, highlight any additional, specific measures put in place during lockdown to ensure reporting by victims of child sexual abuse/exploitation as well as to support and assist them, and whether these measures will be maintained even when the lockdown is lifted.

No information received.

4. Finally, please tell us whether children have been duly listened to on decision-making concerning their protection against sexual abuse/exploitation during this period. Please also tell us whether and how children will be involved in decision-making on or assessing the impact of COVID-19 measures in the future.

No information received.