

# **STANDARDS FOR THE PROTECTION** **OF MINORS**

**Applicable to students of Powiślański University taking practical training (practical classes/internships) and academic teachers/other instructors - supervisors of practical training in institutions referred to in Article 12 item. 6 and 7 of the Act of May 13, 2016 on Counteracting the Threat of Sexual Crime**

**Kwidzyn, Gdansk, Torun, Koscierzyna 2024**

## **Preamble**

On February 15, 2024, the Law of July 28, 2023 on Amendments to the Law - Family and Guardianship Code and Certain Other Laws (Journal of Laws, item 1606) came into force.

As indicated in the Explanatory Memorandum to this law, its purpose was to raise legal standards for the protection of minors, including increasing protection in court procedures, strengthening their protection, including systemic protection from harm, and raising the level of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities. Consistently, the law introduced amendments to a number of laws, including the Family and Guardianship Code, the Civil Procedure Code, the Criminal Executive Code, the Law on Counteracting Domestic Violence, and others.

The Law of July 28, 2023 also made significant changes to the Law of May 13, 2016 on Preventing the Threat of Sexual Crime and Protecting Minors (OJ 2024, item 560). This amendment, providing for the expansion of its subject matter to "protection of minors," aims to comprehensively take care of the safety of persons under the age of 18. The amendment consists, first of all, in introducing, in addition to specific measures for protection against sexual crime, a catalog of specific measures for the protection of minors. These new measures are an assessment of the risk of reoffending against sexual freedom to the detriment of a minor; a Policy for the Protection of Minors; an analysis of incidents in which a minor, as a result of the actions of a parent or legal or actual guardian, has suffered death or serious injury; and control of the performance of duties. In addition, the amendment introduces a statutory legal basis for a national plan to prevent violence and a national plan to prevent crimes against sexual freedom and morals against minors and an inter-ministerial team.

The guiding and unquestionable principle of all activities undertaken by Powiślański University is that students and academic teachers/other instructors should observe the principles of protection of minors with whom they may come into direct contact in the course of the teaching activities held/conducted in the fields of study conducted. Students and Academic Teachers/Other Instructors, in pursuit of these goals, act within the framework of the Student Code of Ethics and the Academic Teacher Code of Ethics, as well as within the framework of applicable law, internal regulations and their own competence, observing the orders and procedures set forth in this document. Increasing awareness among the academic community of the risks will allow for more effective prevention and the creation of an environment devoid of factors that could lead to the violation of the rights of a minor.

## **Legal basis of the Standards for the protection of minors**

The following document was created based on:

- Law of July 29, 2005 on the Prevention of Domestic Violence (Journal of Laws 2021, item 1249 and 2023, items 289 and 535),
- The Act of July 28, 2023, amending the Act - Family and Guardianship Code and certain other laws (Journal of Laws 1606),
- Law of May 13, 2016 on countering the threat of sexual crime (Journal of Laws 2024, item 560);
- Act of May 10, 2018 on the protection of personal data (i.e., Journal of Laws of 2019, item 1781),
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (Journal of Laws 1991 No. 120 item 526,).
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Journal of Laws 2012, item 1169).

The Standards for the Protection of Minors act as a document that organizes procedures for the protection of minors and outlines how the academic community will implement, execute, monitor and evaluate them.

**Chapter I**  
**General provisions**

**§ 1.**

1. The Standards for the Protection of Minors at Powiślański University, hereinafter referred to as the Standards, specify:
  - 1) Rules to ensure safe relations between the minor and the student/academic instructor/other instructor, in particular, prohibited behavior towards minors;
  - 2) principles and procedure for intervening in situations of suspected abuse or having information about abuse of a minor;
  - 3) procedures and persons responsible for filing notifications of suspected crimes against a minor;
  - 4) principles for reviewing and updating the Standards;
  - 5) The scope of authority of the person responsible for preparing students/academics/other instructors to apply the Standards, the rules for preparing students/academics/other instructors for their application and the manner of documenting this activity;
  - 6) persons responsible for receiving reports of incidents threatening a minor and providing support;
  - 7) The manner of documenting and rules for storing disclosed or reported incidents or events threatening the welfare of a minor.
2. In addition, the Standards specify:
  - 1) requirements for safe relations between minors, and in particular prohibited behavior;
  - 2) Rules of action after the disclosure of abuse of a minor.

**Chapter II**  
**Explanation of terms used in the document**  
**Standards for the protection of minors**

**§ 2.**

1. A student is any person with student status at Powiślański University.
2. An apprentice is a student of Powiślański University receiving practical training in accordance with the schedule for the implementation of the curriculum and program of study at a health care unit, as referred to in Article 12 item. 6 and 7 of the Law of May 13, 2016 on Counteracting the Threat of Sexual Crime, with which the University has a relevant agreement.

3. An academic teacher/other instructor is any person employed by the at the University in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Higher Education and Science.
4. A minor is anyone under the age of 18.
5. The guardian of a minor is the person authorized to represent him. Specifically, this is a parent or legal guardian, according to this document, the guardian is also a foster parent.
6. Consent of a parent of a minor means the consent of at least one parent.
7. Abuse of a minor should be understood as: the commission of a criminal act or a criminal act to the detriment of a child, by any person, (including an employee of an institution, referred to in Article 12 para. 6 and 7 of the Law of May 13, 2016. on Counteracting the Threat of Sexual Crime , but also his/her guardians and other patients undergoing treatment at the aforementioned facility) or a threat to the welfare of the child, including neglect of the child.
8. The person responsible for compliance with the Standards for the Protection of Minors is the Vice-Rector for Practical Education who supervises the implementation of the Standards for the Protection of Minors.
9. A child's personal information is any information that can identify the child.

### **Chapter III**

#### **Rules for safe recruitment of academic teachers/other instructors (also applies to those already employed)**

##### **§ 3.**

1. Academic teachers/other instructors are knowledgeable, and as part of their duties are sensitized to the risk factors of child abuse.
2. Before allowing an academic teacher/other instructor to perform his/her duties, the University shall check the person employed in the Sexual Offender Registry.
3. A printout (or generated document in pdf. format) from the Register is kept in the personal file of the academic teacher/other instructor.
4. Academic teacher/other person conducting classes shall be required to submit a certificate of no criminal record obtained from the National Criminal Register. This is because the academic teacher/other person conducting classes must not have been convicted of an intentional crime by a final court judgment.
5. If an academic lecturer/ other person conducting classes is not listed on any of the above mentioned registers – he or she is obliged to submit a statemet, which constitutes Appendix 1 to this ordinance.
6. The statement, which is reffered to in sec. 5 of this paragraph is submitted under penalty of criminal liability for submitting a false statement. The academic lecturer/ other person

conducting classe is obliged to submit the statement which includes a clause of the following content: "I am aware of the criminal liability for submitting a false statement". This clause substitutes the instruction of the body about criminal liability for submitting the false statement.

7. Every academic lecturer/ other person conducting classes gets acquainted to these Standards and confirms this fact in accordance with Appendix 4 to this document.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Rules for the safe admission of a student for practical training**

#### **§ 4.**

1. Students (trainees) have adequate knowledge, and as part of the implementation of practical training are sensitized to the risk factors of child abuse.
2. The following rule of conduct is introduced when the Powiślański University intends to refer a student for practical training in health care units:
  - a) Determining the identity of the student who is to be subject to referral for practical training in health care units;
  - b) Content analysis of the Register of Sexual Offenders through the Internet Information Network (<https://rps.ms.gov.pl/pl-PL/Public#/>), including: Registry with restricted access, Public Registry, and Registry of persons with respect to whom the State Commission for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of Minors under 15 years of age has issued an order for entry in the Registry - from the point of view of the inclusion of student data in these registries;
  - c) If a student is listed in any of the above-mentioned registers - the student shall not be referred for practical training;
  - d) If the student is not listed in any of the above-mentioned registers - he/she is required to submit a statement, which is attached as Appendix No. 1 to this Order.
  - e) If the student does not submit the statement referred to in item (d) - the student shall not be directed to receive practical training;
  - f) If the student submits the statement referred to in item d) - he is obliged to submit it:
    - information from the National Criminal Register.
  - g) The statement referred to in item d) is made under penalty of criminal liability for making a false statement. The student making the statement is obliged to include the following clause: "I am aware of the criminal liability for making a false statement". This clause replaces the authority's instruction on criminal liability for making a false statement.

- h) After obtaining from the student information from the National Criminal Register, respectively, the content of these documents is analyzed. The subject of the analysis is:
- In terms of analyzing information from the National Criminal Register - committing crimes specified in Chapters XIX and XXV of the Criminal Code, in Articles 189a and 207 of the Criminal Code, and in the Act of July 29, 2005 on Counteracting Drug Addiction (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 1939).
- i) A student may be admitted to receive practical training only if, in light of the analysis referred to in item j), there are no grounds for assuming that the student has committed a crime specified in Chapters XIX and XXV of the Penal Code, in Articles 189a and 207 of the Penal Code, and in the Act of July 29, 2005 on Counteracting Drug Addiction (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 1939) or asexual offense.
- j) All documents produced or obtained in connection with the conduct of the proceedings regulated in the provisions above shall be kept in electronic/paper form in the student's personnel file.
3. The student is made familiar with these Standards and confirms this fact in accordance with Appendix 5 to this document.

## **Chapter V**

### **Principles of safe student-minor/academic teacher/other instructor-minor relationships**

#### **§ 5.**

1. The overriding goal of all actions taken by the University authorities is to promote the welfare of the minor patient of the institution, as referred to in Article 12, items. 6 and 7 of the Act of May 13, 2016 on Counteracting the Threat of Sexual Crime against sexual offenses, and its best interests.
2. The student/teacher/other instructor shall treat each minor with respect, taking care of his/her dignity and needs. It is unacceptable is the use of violence in any form against a minor.
3. The student/academic teacher/other instructor is obliged to comply with the applicable law and internal regulations of the University as well as the institution referred to in paragraph 1 in this regard. The rules for creating safe relations with minors apply to all students/academic teachers/other instructors by signing an appropriate statement.
4. The Principles for Safe Relationships with Minors specify what behaviours and practices are not allowed in contact with a minor, and their observance by can reduce the risk of harm to minors.
5. The principles of safe relationships apply to the following areas:

- 1) Physical contact with a minor, which is an inevitable phenomenon. Examples of forms of such contact include:
  - a) Assistance with dressmaking activities ,
  - b) Assistance with walking activities,
  - c) Assistance with meal activities,
  - d) Assistance in grooming, hygiene activities,
  - e) responding to the emotional needs of a minor in particular, e.g., by hugging an adult, etc.; contacts of this type are allowed in the presence of third parties, open spaces, monitored premises, which in case of doubt should serve to their objectification,
  - f) Decisive interventions carried out in direct physical contact are permitted in life and health-threatening situations involving: conflicts between wards (separating feuding subjects, holding them down, overpowering them), pre-medical assistance activities (first aid rescue operations), danger or panic caused by external factors (fire, intense weather phenomena, dangerous behaviour of third parties, etc.);
- 2) Intentional behaviour that arouses a sense of danger or bears the hallmarks of danger is unacceptable:
  - a) Physical violence (e.g. pushing, hitting, wringing hands, choking, kicking, tugging, slapping, etc...),
  - b) eroticize the relationship (flirtation, ambiguous banter, conversation or even a defiant look),
  - c) Sexualization of relationships (sexual intercourse and other sexual activities);
- 3) verbal communication with a minor devoid of hostile, arrogant-aggressive, malicious-ironic, vulgar accents can not:
  - a) arouse in the minor a sense of danger (threats, challenges, shouting),
  - b) lower, destroy self-esteem (e.g., triggering, shouting, negative judging, responding inadequately to the situation, inducing guilt),
  - c) Humiliate (publicly scorn, mock, ridicule),
  - d) violate boundaries (not maintaining an appropriate distance, obsequiousness, overtones of an erotic nature);
- 4) equal treatment consisting in bestowing the same care and attention on all minors, which means that it is not allowed:
  - a) Exclusive focus on selected minor patients while ignoring the needs of others,
  - b) Unjustifiably giving privileges only to a select few and depriving them of them from the rest;



- 5) It is unacceptable to have face-to-face and online contact with a minor outside the facility referred to in Article 12, points. 6 and 7 of the Law of May 13, 2016 on Counteracting the Threat of Sexual Offenses for the purpose of satisfying the student/academic teacher/other instructor's own social or emotional needs, persuading him/her to engage in illegal behavior, giving a sense of being favored, singled out;
- 6) hygiene and nursing activities:
  - a) are intended primarily for personal hygiene and health,
  - b) performed under appropriate conditions that ensure respect for intimacy in this type of activity,
  - c) Abusive behavior that violates privacy and intimacy is not permitted and intimacy;
- 7) disciplining a minor defined as a tool of "feedback", communicating to minors that their attitude in a given situation is not appropriate, contrary to expectations and/or ineffective; discipline is to stimulate learning, not to cause harm to the minor; unacceptable are all forms of discipline aimed at humiliation, humiliation based on based on the use of advantage:
  - a) Physical (aggression, use of physical punishment, means of direct coercion, restraint, isolation; preventing the realization of basic physiological needs - deprivation of sleep, food, exposure to cold, heat, etc.; physical work inadequate to capabilities, committing behavior of a sexual nature),
  - b) Psychological (domination through shouting, threats, inducing guilt, violating self-esteem, disregarding psychological needs, e.g. security, belonging, love, simulations that induce fear and concern for one's own life and that of the family).
- 8) In order to objectivize the reported problem situations in the facility, referred to in Article 12 para. 6 and 7 of the Law of May 13, 2016 on Counteracting the Threat of Sexual Crime, there is video monitoring of the external area and internal premises.
- 9) The use of monitoring records is determined by the internal procedures of the facility, as referred to in Article 12, items. 6 and 7 of the Law of May 13, 2016. on Counteracting the Threat of Sexual Crime, on the protection and processing of personal data.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Procedure for intervention in case of abuse of a minor**

## § 6.

1. In the event that a student obtains information that a minor is being abused, the student is obliged to make a business note and pass the obtained information to the academic teacher/other instructor (supervisor of practical training). The academic teacher, on the other hand, is obliged to notify the management of the institution ref. 6 and 7 of the Law of May 13, 2016 on Countering the Threat of Sexual Crime .
2. If an academic teacher/other instructor (supervisor of practical training) obtains information that a minor is being abused, the academic teacher/other instructor (supervisor of practical training) shall be obliged to make an official note and pass on the information obtained to the management of the institution referred to in Article 12, items. 6 and 7 of the Law of May 13, 2016 on counteracting the threat of sexual offenses
3. In the case of an act of harming a minor, including violation of the rules of safe student-minor relationship, as referred to in Chapter V hereof, the academic teacher/other instructor is obliged to make an official note and communicate the obtained information to the management of the institution, referred to in Article 12, paras. 6 and 7 of the Law of May 13, 2016 on Countering the Threat of Sexual Offenses and the Vice-Rector for Practical Education. Based on the above information, the management of the institution will carry out explanatory actions according to the applicable procedure of the institution, while the Vice-Rector for Practical Education will refer the case to the student disciplinary procedure. Until this act is clarified, the student will be suspended from continuing practical training at the facility.
4. In the event of an act of harm to a minor, including violation of the rules of safe relationship between the academic teacher/other instructor and the minor, referred to in Chapter V hereof, the management of the institution referred to in Article 12, para. 6 and 7 of the Act of May 13, 2016 on Counteracting the Threat of Sexual Crime shall carry out the procedural steps in force at the institution and notifies the University that the act was committed by an academic teacher/other instructor. The authorities of the University shall take investigative action by way of disciplinary proceedings, with the obligation to cease performing official activities until the matter is clarified.
5. In the case referred to in paragraph 3 of this section, committing the act may result in expulsion from the University.
6. In the case referred to in paragraph 4 of this section, committing the act may result in termination of the contract with the academic teacher/other instructor.

## Chapter VII

### Principles of protection of personal data of a minor

## **§ 7.**

1. The minor's personal data shall be protected under the terms of the Personal Data Protection Act of August 29, 1997.
2. The student/teacher/other instructor is obliged to keep the personal data he/she processes confidential and to keep the ways of securing the personal data confidential, against unauthorized access.
3. Personal data of minor patients are used only for the purpose for which they have been made available.
4. The personal data of the minor, shall be made available only to persons and entities authorized under separate regulations, applicable to the medical institution referred to in Article 12 item. 6 and 7 of the Law of May 13, 2016. on counteracting the threat of sexual offenses

## **§ 8.**

1. The student/teacher/other instructor shall not provide media representatives with information about the minor or his/her guardians.
2. Student/teacher/other instructor does not put media representatives in contact with minor patients.
3. The student/teacher/other instructor does not speak out in contact with media representatives about the case of the child or his/her guardian. This prohibition also applies if the student/academic/other instructor is convinced that his/her statement is not recorded in any way.

## **Chapter VIII**

### **Principles of protecting the image of a minor**

## **§9.**

1. Students/Academics/Other instructors, recognizing the minor's right to privacy and protection of personal property, shall ensure the protection of the minor's image.
2. Students/academics/other instructors are not allowed to allow media representatives to capture the image of a minor (filming, photographing, recording the child's voice) on the premises of the institution.

## **§10.**

Students/academics/other instructors are not allowed to make public the image of a minor captured in any form (photograph, audio-video recording).

## **Chapter IX**

### **Monitoring the application of the Standards for the Protection of Minors**

#### **§ 11.**

1. The Rector of the University designates the persons responsible for monitoring the implementation of these Standards. These are the **Vice Rector for Practical Education, the Director of the Dean's Division/Dean's Office Manager, and the Head of Employee Affairs.**
2. The persons referred to in the preceding paragraph are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Standards, for responding to signals of violations, and for proposed changes to the Standards.
3. The persons referred to in paragraph 1 of this section shall conduct a survey among students/academics/other instructors once every 6 months to monitor the level of implementation of the Standards.
4. In the survey, students/academics/other instructors can suggest changes and indicate violations of the Standards.
5. The person referred to in paragraph 1 of this section shall process the completed surveys by students/academic teachers/other instructors. He/she prepares a monitoring report on this basis, which he/she then submits to the Rector.
6. The Rector makes the necessary changes to the Standards and announces the new wording.

## **Chapter X**

### **Final Regulations**

#### **§ 12.**

1. The standards enter into force on the date of publication.
2. Announcement is made in a way that is accessible to students and academics/other instructors, in particular, by making it available on the University's website, sending information in the University's WD system as well as to e-mail addresses with the PSW domain.
3. List of annexes to the Standards for the Protection of Minors:
  1. **Attachment No. 1** - Model - Declaration of no criminal record;
  2. **Appendix No. 2** - Model - Standards Monitoring Survey;
  3. **Appendix No. 3** - Model - Business Note;

4. **Appendix No. 4** - Model - Statement of the academic teacher on familiarization with the Standards for the Protection of Minors;
5. **Appendix No. 5** - Model - Student's statement on familiarization with the Standards for the Protection of Minors;
6. **Appendix 6** - How to recognize violence against a child .

Katarzyna Strzała-Osuch, PhD, Professor of PSW

Rector

**Appendix No. 1** - to the *Standards for the Protection of Minors*  
Model - Declaration of no criminal record

**Statement**

I, ..... holding identity card number .....  
..... I declare that I have not been convicted of a crime against sexual freedom and morals  
and violent crimes against a minor, and no criminal or disciplinary proceedings are pending  
against me in this regard.

**"I am aware of the criminal liability for making a false statement".**

....., dn. ....

.....  
(legible signature or signed with a qualified  
electronic signature/trusted signature)

**Appendix No. 2** - to the *Standards for the Protection of Minors*  
Model - Standards Monitoring Survey

### **Monitoring of standards - survey**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Not</b>
1. are you familiar with the standards for the protection of minors implemented by Powiślański University?		
(2) Have you reviewed the document Standards for the Protection of Minors as implemented by Powiślański University?		
3 Can you recognize the symptoms of child abuse?		
4. do you know how to respond to child abuse?		
5. Did you happen to observe any violation of the rules in the Standards by students?		
6. Did you happen to observe any violation of the principles contained in the Standards by academic staff?		
6. Do you have any comments/revisions/suggestions regarding the Standards for the Protection of Minors implemented by Powiślański University ?		

**Appendix No. 3** - to the *Standards for the Protection of Minors*  
Template - Business Memo

.....  
(place, date)

**MEMORANDUM**

Day ..... at  
.....  
(location)

at ..... held a meeting attended by:

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

Topics of the meeting included:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Established:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
(signature, official position)



**Appendix No. 4** - to the *Standards for the Protection of Minors*  
Model - Employee's statement of familiarization with  
with the Standards for the Protection of Minors

....., on .....  
(name)

.....  
(position)

**STATEMENT**

I, the undersigned, declare that I have familiarized myself with the Standards for the Protection of Minors implemented by Powiślański University and accept them for implementation.

.....  
(legible signature or signed by a qualified  
electronic signature/trusted signature )

**Appendix No. 5** - to the *Standards for the Protection of Minors*  
Model - Student's statement on familiarization with the  
Standards for the Protection of Minors

....., on .....

(name)

.....  
(year of study, major, album number)

**STATEMENT**

I, the undersigned, declare that I have familiarized myself with the Standards for the Protection of Minors implemented by Powiślański University and accept them for implementation.

.....  
(legible signature or signed by a qualified  
electronic signature/trusted signature)

## **Appendix No. 6 - to *Standards for the protection of minors***

How do you recognize violence against a child?

### **How to recognize violence against a child ?**

The occurrence of a single symptom does not always tell us that a minor is experiencing violence, but if the symptom is repeated or there are several of them at the same time with high probability we can determine that we are dealing with abuse of a minor.

#### **React when:**

- The minor is often dirty and smells unpleasant,
- The minor steals food, money, etc.,
- minor begs,
- The minor is hungry,
- The minor is not getting the medical care he needs, vaccinations, glasses, etc,
- The minor has no clothes, shoes or other items of daily use,
- The minor has visible injuries (bruises, burns, bites, broken bones, etc.), the origin of which is difficult to explain. The injuries are in various stages of healing, the explanations given by the minor for the injuries seem unreliable, impossible, inconsistent, etc. the minor frequently changes them,
- The minor excessively covers the body, inappropriate to the situation and the weather,
- The minor is afraid of the parent, afraid before returning home,
- The minor flinches when approached by an adult,
- The minor suffers from recurring somatic complaints: abdominal pain, headaches, nausea, etc.,
- The minor is passive, withdrawn, submissive, fearful, depressed, etc., or behaves aggressively, rebels, self-harms, etc.,
- The minor uses psychoactive drugs,
- The minor excessively seeks contact with another adult (known as the minor's emotional stickiness),
- The minor wets and contaminates himself involuntarily in specific situations or or at the sight of certain people,
- The minor has abrasions of the epidermis, soreness of the genitals and/or anus,
- in conversations, behavior of the minor begins to dominate sexual elements / motives,
- The minor is sexually aroused inappropriately for his age,
- The minor talks about violence, tells about the situations he experiences.

#### **Pay attention when:**

- The parent gives unconvincing or contradictory information or refuses to explain the reasons for the minor's injuries,
- The parent refuses, does not maintain contact with those interested in the fate of the minor,
- The parent talks about the minor in a negative way, constantly blames, humiliates and reproves the minor (e.g.: using vulgarities, abusive terms),
- The parent subjects the minor to harsh discipline or is overprotective or overindulgent or rejects the minor,
- The parent is not interested in the fate and problems of the minor,
- The parent is apathetic, plunged into depression,
- The parent behaves aggressively,
- The parent has a disturbed contact with reality, e.g.: reacts inadequately to the situation, expresses himself incoherently,
- The parent has no awareness or denies the minor's needs,
- A parent favors one of the siblings,
- The parent exceeds acceptable limits in physical contact with the minor,
- The parent abuses alcohol, drugs or other intoxicants.

Paying attention to the symptoms present in a child with a chronic illness, it is important to focus on the difficulties of the illness that the minor is facing. It should be noted that the minor is the one who experiences changes in mood and struggles with both his own perception of the situation and the reaction of others. Recognizing violence perpetrated against a minor with a chronic disability or chronic illness is a complicated task, and for many reasons.

- Witnesses - in many situations, for environmental reasons, witnesses may find it difficult to have access to the child, and parents, even if they use violence against the child, still remain the most important and often the only caregivers;
- Traces - the recognition of traces is sometimes complicated by the difficulty of determining their origin;
- Some mental disorders and somatic illnesses can produce similar symptoms, so it can be a difficulty to recognize the symptoms of experiencing violence by a minor with a disability or illness. It is important to analyze, what the caregiver's disturbing behaviors stem from.
- Communication problems - children with disabilities or chronic illnesses sometimes have specific limitations in communicating with others, in practice making it difficult or impossible to understand their statements or thoughts. In such situations, it is necessary to use methods of communication adapted to the degree of the child's disability, such as supportive and alternative AAC communication methods.

Disclosure of violence by a minor is a very emotionally difficult way out of a from the relationship with the perpetrator of violence, as it requires courage and determination. In such a situation, a completely normal emotional reaction of a minor is fear or anxiety about disclosing the experience. The minor usually remains heavily dependent on the parents, which is especially true for children with disabilities or chronic illnesses. In order to choose to disclose the abuse, the minor must overcome his sense of loyalty to the abusive parent. He also has to face the risk and danger that disclosure will not only fail to improve the situation in the family, but will actually worsen it, causing, for example, the perpetrator to become angry and escalate violent behavior toward the child.

**IMPORTANT!**

- When talking about violence, the minor does not give all the information about his experiences.
- The minor is accompanied by fear for the fate of his parent, guardian and his own.
- The circumstances of disclosure are related to the separation of the minor from the abuser - distance equals security, proximity means fear.
- Distortion in the minor's way of thinking - a sense of guilt and responsibility for the violence suffered.

### Symptoms of child sexual abuse

It is important to remember that the initial consequences experienced by sexually abused children-both physical and psychological-are at the same time signs of this form of abuse, so it is necessary to have a detailed knowledge of the symptoms of child sexual abuse and increased vigilance when they appear.

The signs of sexual abuse of a minor **vary** greatly from which it follows that one cannot speak of an abused minor syndrome or a set of symptoms indicative of abuse. There are no symptoms that would allow one to unequivocally and with absolute certainty to recognize a case of child sexual abuse. **Symptoms largely depend on the child.** For some children, certain symptoms are present from the very beginning, while for others they may appear later in life, even long after the abuse has stopped. **For this reason, workers should remember, that the absence of symptoms does not mean that a minor has not been a victim of abuse.**

However, attention should be paid (among other things) to repeated urinary tract infections, difficulty walking or sitting, stained or torn clothing (without a plausible explanation), the minor's complaint of pain, inflammation or itching of the intimate area, pain on urination, and injuries to the external genital or anal area.

### Symptoms of child sexual abuse occurring in the emotional and behavioral spheres:

Lp.	Type of consequence	Symptoms
1.	<b>Emotional problems</b>	Anxieties and phobias, distrust, depression, high levels of anxiety, low self-esteem, guilt, shame, stigma, post-traumatic stress symptoms, nightmares, recurrent dreams, hyper-vigilance, heightened anxiety reaction, problem with acceptance of one's own body behavior, self-destructive, suicidal thoughts or attempts.
2.	<b>Cognitive problems</b>	Attention problems, poor performance In learning.
3.	<b>Problems in relationships</b>	Few friends, less time to play with peers, isolation, deficit in social skills.
4.	<b>Functional problems</b>	Sleep problems, change in eating habits with eating, loss of sphincter control: involuntary wetting and fecal contamination, somatic complaints: headaches or abdominal pain, hyperactivity.

