



International Society for Krishna Consciousness
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ISKCON Child Protection Oversight Committee Fact Sheet

This document, prepared by the Child Protection Oversight Committee (“CPOC”), outlines the key points of ISKCON’s newly adopted Enhanced Approach to Child Protection. As the first official document issued by the CPOC, it aims to address and clarify concerns. It attempts to provide accurate information while promoting transparency. Child protection and care is the responsibility of every member of ISKCON. A preventative approach based on good governance, independence, accountability, and fairness informs this Enhanced Approach to Child Protection.

Questions and Discussion Points	Clarification
(1) What informs the changes in the ISKCON’s Child Protection Office (“CPO”) structure?	At the Annual General Meeting (“AGM”) in 2024, the Governing Body Commission (“GBC”) engaged in discussions about improving child protection services for the global ISKCON Community. The GBC Executive Support Office (“ESO”) was then tasked to propose changes, if any, that would better serve the purpose of global child protection. Consequently, after a year of deliberations and multiple presentations to the GBC body, the Enhanced Approach to Child Protection Framework was adopted, with a formal review to take place in six months, to assess effectiveness and areas for improvement.
(2) What is the Enhanced Approach to Child Protection?	The Enhanced Approach retains ISKCON’s <u>existing</u> child protection policies as prescribed by the CPO Guidelines. The Enhanced Approach introduces three (3) new pillars of child protection i.e., a global

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	Oversight Committee of five (5) members, a collaborative partnership with Regional Governing Bodies and External case investigations.
(3) What is the Child Protection Oversight Committee (“CPOC”)?	<p>The Child Protection Oversight Committee is a GBC-nominated body responsible for upholding policies, structures, and processes for effective child protection across ISKCON. Operating independently, the CPOC does not engage in direct involvement with specific cases, adjudications, or appeals. Instead, its role is to provide governance, oversight, and strategic guidance for ISKCON’s global child protection efforts.</p> <p>It comprises five (5) members; three from a mixed legal and CPO background, an independent member (not a member of ISKCON) and another child protection expert. Currently, the Committee has three members. In the coming months, the two additional members will join the CPOC, enhancing its capacity to serve ISKCON’s child protection needs effectively.</p>
(4) But the Current members of the CPOC are mostly legally trained professionals, and not CPO experts.	<p>Currently, the Committee comprises three highly qualified legal professionals, each holding the highest degrees in their respective fields, including doctoral qualifications from prestigious institutions. They each bring decades of practical experience, and they have been recognized as experts both in scholarship through peer-reviewed publications and practice. They have extensive experience in child protection – bringing secular court room experience in litigating and adjudicating child abuse and neglect cases.</p> <p>Their experience includes direct involvement in litigation and adjudication of complex child protection matters employing trauma-informed practices. They further have extensive experience in operational management, project design (for child protection initiatives) and interdisciplinary collaborations with social workers and medical practitioners in child protection cases. Their collective expertise ensures a nuanced understanding of both the legal and practical aspects of safeguarding children. All members of the CPOC are ISKCON devotees, who have served in various capacities within</p>

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	<p>ISKCON. The extensive experience of its members, combined with their dedicated service to ISKCON, ensures that the Committee operates with the highest standards of professionalism and integrity.</p>
<p>(5) What is a Regional Governing Body?</p>	<p>ISKCON operates across the world, complying with different local laws and represents unique cultures and languages. A Regional Governing Body (“RGB”) is established in terms of ISKCON Law, and is a management body whereby the temple presidents, projects leaders and GBC members of a particular geographical region are represented. The RGB must have a constitution that is approved by the global GBC body. The RGB is the highest ecclesiastic body within that geographic region and the official contact point for the GBC. Currently, there is North American RGB, African RGB, Russian RGB, Euro RGB, India Bureau and Latin American RGB.</p> <p>The RGB represents many temples and countries within a region. Each RGB must have a CPO Director for its region. While there may be as many CPO Officers as there are temples and countries, there is only one RGB CPO Director for the region.</p>
<p>(6) What is meant by external case investigations and what will be the applicable legal standard?</p>	<p>Historically, child abuse cases were investigated internally by ISKCON devotees. Despite the professionalism and best efforts, the fairness of the investigation process was often contested.</p> <p>In keeping with good governance and to guarantee a professional, impartial and authoritative investigation, the new model proposes that all future cases be investigated by professionals outside of ISKCON. Thus, external Investigators are outside independent professionals who carry indemnity and are certified by secular and government authorities. They are highly trained professionals. Their investigations are free of any ISKCON influence. That said, the hiring of outside investigators does not mean that secular legal standards will be employed. To the contrary, as prescribed by the CPO Guidelines, the standard applied will be that of preponderance of evidence – in lieu of proof beyond reasonable doubt.</p>

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	<p>At the conclusion of the investigation, the final adjudication as to a finding of abuse will still vest with the CPO panel, as it has thus far, and the process as to the selection of panelists remains intact. This enhancement will allow for a fair and thorough investigation, where the truth is uncovered, and justice is served.</p> <p>Advanced training will be provided to CPO case review panelists, inter alia, in the assessment of testimonies which will include analyzing the admissibility of evidence, weight to be placed on evidence, understanding the concept of preponderance of evidence, aggravating and mitigating factors, decision writing, identifying biases, and more.</p>
(7) What then is the interrelationship between the Child Protection Oversight Committee, the Regional Governing Body, and the Independent Investigator?	<p>The following example best illustrates this:</p> <p>A case arises at a temple in Nairobi and is reported either by the complainant or the local Nairobi Child Protection Team (“CPT”) Officer to the CPOC as the first point of contact. The CPOC opens the file, allocates a reference number and hands the file to the Africa RGB CPO Director. The Africa CPO Director then appoints the external investigator (under the guidance of the CPOC) to decide whether there is merit in the investigation. Only the external investigator can decide on whether a case is to be investigated or not. The CPOC, as a guardian of the CPO process, keeps an eye on the investigation and works with the Africa RGB CPO Director, until the matter is decided. A complainant may always approach the CPOC directly if they so wish.</p>

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<p>(8) But external investigations are expensive and maybe unaffordable.</p>	<p>Agreed. But this is the governance and independence threshold that informs the Enhanced Approach. For the findings to be accepted, respected and recommendations implemented, the process must be free of any ISKCON interference or influence.</p> <p>The Local RGB, that comprises several temples and leaders are now tasked to devise plans to fund the RGB CPO Director's work. This signals a positive change from leaders for enhanced child protection. RGB members host significant festivals, Ratha Yatras, do elaborate Deity worship, maintain huge temples – and now a call is made to make a modest provision for a CPO reserve Fund. Of course, independent investigators could be retired professionals or members of other faith-based organizations, thus keeping the cost to a minimum. The CPOC is tasked to ensure that RGBs have models for funding and a reserve fund in place.</p>
<p>(9) How does the CPOC fund itself?</p>	<p>The CPOC will continue to receive the CPO budget allocated by the GBC budgetary process at each AGM. The budget that was allocated to the International Child Protection Office Director ("ICPO") is now allocated to the CPOC.</p>
<p>(10) Can the local RGB member, temple president or GBC interfere with a case?</p>	<p>The Enhanced Approach relies on the integrity of those serving in local Child Protection Teams, local CPOs and regional CPOs. Furthermore, the ability to influence a case is greatly minimized as cases are reported directly to the CPOC. Case investigations and deliberations are independent of RGB and GBC influence. Where there may be a case of global significance a cross RGB team will be convened.</p>
<p>(11) Does the Enhanced Approach mean that all the devotees serving within the CPO</p>	<p>In fact, the regional CPOs now have a greater role to play by managing cases regionally. This has the benefit of more readily available resources, engaging investigators, who speak the same language as the parties involved, and engaging local review panelists, thereby expediting the turn-around time in the finalization of cases. This relieves the current ICPO caseload and expands the database of trained</p>

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structures worldwide are now relieved of their services?	<p>Child Protection Team members, investigators and review panelists. All temple CPTs, country and regional CPO Directors remain in their service and continue their service.</p> <p>Additionally, the Enhanced Approach places an exponentially greater emphasis on pre-emptive CPO care – training, awareness and monitoring to prevent abuse. This is the crux of child protection i.e., the creation of an environment for safety and deterrence of abusers from inflicting any harm by adopting preventative measures.</p>
(12) What has changed with this Enhanced Approach?	<p>As a preliminary matter, the CPO Guidelines remain intact and sacrosanct. Back in 1998, the GBC passed a resolution that every ISKCON center should have an active and trained CPT. The Enhanced Approach now effectively ensures that this resolution becomes a reality by compelling local authorities to prioritize child protection efforts.</p> <p>Periodical updates to the CPO Guidelines as required by a GBC resolution have been undertaken. The current ICPO Director participated actively in providing comments on the updates that have been adopted by the GBC and passed via the Spiritual Advisors Bhagavata Assembly (“SABHA”) and which are currently being incorporated into the 2025 version of the CPO Guidelines. The only major difference is that external investigators will now be engaged. All the rules of natural justice and processes as embodied in the current (2018) Guidelines and enhancements, which were provided by several experts, including Janaki Devi Dasi, Revati Dasi, Gandharvika Dasi, Kamlesh Krishna, Anuttama, Manorama and Caitanya Mangala Prabhus have been considered and adopted by the GBC for incorporation in the updated Guidelines.</p> <p>In sum, the Enhanced Approach emphasizes regional collaboration and local accountability. The key changes include:</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition of Oversight: Governance and oversight functions shift from a single International CPO Director to the CPOC, which will provide global coordination and oversight, supported by Regional Governing Bodies. • Regional Implementation: The RGBs, through the RGB CPO Director, oversee regional child protection efforts, adjudications, and appeals, ensuring a broader perspective and collaboration across jurisdictions. The local temple or country CPO officer, continues to serve in their respective roles. • Focus on Prevention and Support: Greater emphasis is on proactive prevention measures and victim support resources. • Localized Accountability: Local leaders receive targeted training and resources to implement child protection measures effectively. • Sustainable Funding: Enhancement of centralized and regional funding strategies will prioritize and ensure long-term support for child protection initiatives, with proportional contributions from temples and strategic fundraising efforts.
(13) How does the CPOC differ from what we know as the International CPO Director role?	The CPOC replaces the singular role of the International CPO Director office with a collaborative committee of experts. Unlike the previous model, the CPOC focuses on oversight, policy formulation, fund raising and support while delegating regional implementation to RGBs. This structure ensures broader expertise, transparency, impartiality, oversight, and accountability with clear separation of concern.
(14) Will RGBs have the proper training and capacity to implement this new approach?	Mandatory training for RGB members and specifically the RGB Director, temple presidents, regional CPO Directors and CPTs will ensure they are equipped to handle child protection responsibilities effectively. There will also be prioritization of centralized resources and oversight from the CPOC to support RGBs in meeting their obligations.

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<p>(15) Why were the local CPO Directors not consulted before presenting the proposal to the GBC?</p>	<p>We acknowledge more consultations could have been done during this process. The CPOC discussed the Enhanced Approach with Kamlesh Krishna Prabhu and Gandharvika Dasi as the ICPO team, and their input was considered. The CPOC further relied on formal CPO review outcomes, the child safeguarding report, and position papers published by various regional CPOs. In hindsight, it would have been prudent to consult more extensively with the regional CPO Directors, and we take full responsibility for that.</p> <p>The CPOC remains dedicated to fostering open communication, encouraging feedback, and promoting collaboration as ISKCON transitions to the enhanced child protection structure. Importantly, the GBC will review the efficacy of the enhanced model every six (6) months. The CPOC encourages devotees and well-wishers to send concerns, advice, comments and proposals to the CPOC by contacting us at: cpoc.iskcon@gmail.com</p>
<p>(16) What does this change mean for previous cases and judgements?</p>	<p>The Enhanced Approach is <u>not retroactive</u>. It upholds decisions made under prior processes, which remain final. It applies only to pending cases that have not yet been adjudicated and future cases. Affected parties in these cases may file appeals where permissible under the CPO Guidelines.</p>
<p>(17) How will a complaint be processed – should such a complaint occur when the new Enhanced approach is implemented?</p>	<p>An illustration was given in section (7). Specifically, the following process will apply:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Complaints are submitted by the local child protection team or the complainant directly to the global CPOC.2. The complaint is documented and logged in the central database maintained by CPOC.3. The CPOC allocates a file or reference number, to track the progress of the case.4. The CPOC sends the complaint to the CPO Director of the RGB concerned.5. The RGB CPO Director appoints an external investigator.6. Appeals, if applicable, are handled independently, following CPO Guidelines.

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	<p>7. The CPOC may be consulted on the process and procedure but does not engage in case adjudication. A complainant may always approach the CPOC directly.</p>
<p>(18) How will conflicts of interest or perceptions of bias be addressed?</p>	<p>Conflicts of interest and biases, whether conscious or unconscious, are not unique to ISKCON; they frequently arise in spiritual and secular contexts, such as workplaces, educational institutions, and government bodies, where individuals involved in investigations may have personal or professional connections to the parties. To address these concerns, the CPOC is implementing the following safeguards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigations are conducted by vetted, independent professionals with no ties to the case. • RGB members, CPO Directors and personnel <u>must</u> disclose conflicts of interest, with cases reassigned as necessary. • The CPOC oversees case tracking, ensuring consistency and accountability. • Investigations, adjudications, and appeals are handled independently, with each phase separated from the individuals and processes involved in others, ensuring clear role separation. • A whistleblower mechanism will allow concerns about bias to be escalated directly to the CPOC for prompt review.
<p>(19) Is the cost of professional Investigators sustainable?</p>	<p>The CPOC emphasizes that prioritizing child protection funding reflects ISKCON's commitment to moral and spiritual responsibilities. The annual GBC budget on child protection remains intact. Our proposed strategic plan includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening Localized Funding Efforts: Each RGB will establish a dedicated CPO fund to enable its local CPO director to appoint independent investigators and support child protection initiatives. For example, if 50 temples within a region each contribute \$1,000

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	<p>annually, this effort alone would generate \$50,000, not including additional revenue from other sources. This model ensures sustainable funding while promoting shared responsibility across the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Pooling: A centralized fund will ensure the equitable distribution of resources, allowing wealthier temples to support underfunded areas within a zone. The RGB CPO director will oversee this RGB-managed fund, establish reserve levels, assist regions without an existing fund, and collaborate on strategies to develop and sustain funding mechanisms, in consultation with the CPOC. • Flexible Models: <i>Pro bono</i> or reduced-rate services from professionals will help maintain high standards without excessive costs. Etc.
(20) What is the plan for training local leaders?	<p>Local leaders and Regional Child Protection Officers will receive mandatory training on safeguarding protocols, legal requirements, conflict management, identification of biases, confidentiality, and more. Oversight will be maintained through a multi-tiered structure, with the CPOC providing guidance and monitoring. Regional teams will have access to centralized resources, including expert advisors and investigators, ensuring consistent alignment with global standards.</p>
(21) Why is there a need for a transitional CPO Director and how will child protection be guaranteed during the transition?	<p>To ensure continuity, Champakalata Devi Dasi, the GBC Minister of Justice, will serve as Interim International CPO Director starting March 1, 2025, for a period of 3–6 months. This was necessary for two reasons: Firstly, the GBC wanted a firmer transitional arrangement, to ensure that new or pending cases are carefully managed. Secondly, the current ICPO Director had indicated that he would not stay on beyond February 28, 2025. Consequently, the interim arrangement was seen as a responsible and prudent way forward.</p>

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	The CPOC will work closely with the GBC Justice Minister (interim CPO Director), during the transitional phase, to oversee progress and offer support, to ensure child safety remains uncompromised. The governance and oversight functions of the current International Child Protection Office will eventually transition to the Child Protection Oversight Committee.
(22) Who will be issuing CPO clearances going forward?	The CPOC's administrative assistant will attend to maintaining the CPO database and issuing of clearance certificates.
(23) What is the timeline for the implementation of the Enhanced Approach model?	The Enhanced Approach will commence implementation starting March 1, 2025. The CPOC will, by then, be fully constituted with five members together with administrative support. Progress will be reviewed by the GBC biannually to assess effectiveness and make adjustments, if necessary.
(24) How do we contact the CPOC?	Please contact the CPOC at: cpoc.iskcon@gmail.com

Your servants,

ISKCON Child Protection Oversight Committee

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