



Textile
Exchange

Safeguarding Policy



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Document revision

This policy will be formally reviewed every three years or sooner, if warranted.

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Version 1.0

Contents

- Document revision notes 2
- Purpose 3
- Scope..... 3
- Responsible department and team..... 4
- References and related documents 4
- Definitions..... 4
- Policy statement..... 5
 - Our safeguarding principles*..... 5
 - Zero tolerance approach*..... 5
 - Safeguarding expectations for staff and representatives*..... 6
 - Reporting and response* 6
 - Monitoring and review* 7
- Appendix A 8
 - Special circumstances*..... 8

Purpose

Textile Exchange is committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all individuals or groups involved in our work and for those who come into contact with Textile Exchange through its work. This policy outlines our approach to preventing and responding to safeguarding concerns, ensuring the protection of individuals from abuse, exploitation, and harm. The policy supports the Textile Exchange *Code of Conduct* that provides a framework and collection of values, principles, and policies that guide decision-making and governs operations, practices, and processes related to the work of Textile Exchange around the world.

Scope

The *Safeguarding Policy* applies to all Textile Exchange staff (including staff employed through an Employer-of-Record and interim staff) and representatives engaged in activities related to our work. It encompasses all activities conducted with the support and approval of Textile Exchange.

When we find violations of this policy or any associated policies, we hold individuals and organizations accountable.

Responsible department and team

This policy is owned and approved by the Textile Exchange Chief Executive Officer. The Executive team is overall responsible for maintaining and implementing this policy and for promoting a culture of safeguarding individuals and groups from harm.

The People and Culture team oversees safeguarding efforts, including training, policy updates, and case management with input from internal human rights expertise.

References and related documents

- *Code of Conduct*
- *Complaints Policy*
- *Grievance Policy*
- *Global Employee Handbook*
- *Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Prevention Policy*
- *Whistleblower Policy*
- *Data Governance Policy*
- *Privacy Policy*

Definitions

Safeguarding: Measures to protect the health, well-being, and human rights of individuals, especially children and vulnerable adults, to enable them to live free from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Abuse: Any action that intentionally harms or injures another person. This includes physical, emotional, mental, sexual, and financial abuse, as well as neglect.

Child: A child is any individual under the age of 18. All children, regardless of their age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, or identity, are entitled to equal protection from all forms of harm and abuse.

Exploitation: The act of using someone unfairly for one's own advantage, including sexual exploitation and abuse.

Harm: Any detrimental effect on a person's physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, or economic well-being.

Neglect: Neglect is the failure to provide adequate care, protection, or supervision that results in harm or places a person at risk of harm.

Survivor: The person who it is alleged has been the subject of harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The term "survivor" is often used in preference to "victim" as it implies agency, strength, resilience, and the capacity to survive; however, it is the individual's choice how they wish to identify themselves.

Vulnerable adult: Vulnerable adults are defined as people who are unable to take care of protecting themselves against harm or exploitation for any reason. When safeguarding adults, this

involves reducing and preventing the risk of harm, neglect, or abuse alongside supporting them to maintain their own lives. While most would consider vulnerable adults to be those who lack capacity, adults with full capacity can also be considered as vulnerable as well. This is when they are unable to take care or protect themselves from harm.

Vulnerable populations: Vulnerable populations include children and vulnerable adults, who are at heightened risk of violence, harassment, and discrimination because of an increased susceptibility based on characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, socioeconomic situation, or belief.

Policy statement

Textile Exchange is committed to creating, maintaining, and enabling a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all individuals engaged in or affected by our work. We believe that everyone—especially children, vulnerable adults, and marginalized communities—has the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, exploitation, neglect, and harm.

As a global non-profit accelerating beneficial impact in the textile industry, we uphold the highest standards of integrity, accountability, and care. This *Safeguarding Policy* outlines our commitment to preventing harm, promoting well-being, and responding swiftly and effectively to any safeguarding concerns across our initiatives, operations, and partnerships.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and we expect all board members, staff, volunteers, and representatives engaged in activities conducted under the support and approval of Textile Exchange to uphold these standards at all times.

Our safeguarding principles

- **Zero tolerance:** Textile Exchange maintains a zero-tolerance stance towards all forms of abuse and exploitation.
- **Accountability:** All allegations will be taken seriously, investigated promptly, and appropriate action will be taken.
- **Prevention:** Proactive measures will be taken to prevent safeguarding incidents, including risk assessments and implementing control measures.
- **Knowledge:** Individuals will be supported to understand their rights and how to report concerns.
- **Confidentiality:** Information related to safeguarding concerns will be handled with utmost confidentiality and shared only on a need-to-know basis.

Zero tolerance approach

Textile Exchange maintains a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of harm, abuse, exploitation, and harassment, including gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), neglect, and any behavior that compromises the safety or dignity of individuals.

This applies across all levels of the organization and in every context of our work. No form of misconduct will be tolerated.

Allegations or concerns will be treated seriously and acted upon promptly through fair, confidential, and survivor-centered procedures.

We are committed to fostering a culture of safety, accountability, and transparency in all our interactions, striving to protect everyone we engage with from harm.

Safeguarding expectations for staff and representatives

At Textile Exchange, we are committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all individuals we work with or impact, including children, vulnerable populations, colleagues, and community members. All Textile Exchange staff and representatives are expected to uphold the highest standards of integrity and accountability. Therefore:

Staff and representatives must not:

- Engage in any form of sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment.
- Engage in any form of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse.
- Develop inappropriate or exploitative relationships with those in a position of vulnerability or dependence.
- Use their position of power or trust for personal gain or to exploit others.
- Ignore or conceal suspected safeguarding violations.

Staff and representatives are obligated to:

- Reject all forms of exploitation, abuse, and harassment.
- Be alert to signs of harm, abuse, harassment, or discrimination, and take steps to prevent these actions or report the actions according to this policy.
- Maintain professional and appropriate boundaries in all relationships, particularly with vulnerable populations.
- Contribute to a safe environment that actively prevents safeguarding violations.
- Incorporate safeguarding principles into Textile Exchange's work, partnerships, and organizational practices.
- Promptly report any safeguarding concerns or violations through the appropriate channels.
- Comply with all applicable safeguarding-related laws, regulations, and local customs where Textile Exchange operates.

Reporting and response

Textile Exchange will ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to staff, representatives, communities in which we work, and through external parties. All reports will be treated with the utmost sensitivity and confidentiality.

Textile Exchange has a zero-tolerance approach to retaliation. Retaliation, intimidation, or victimization of reporters or witnesses will be treated as a serious breach of policy and may result in disciplinary or legal action. We are committed to fostering a culture where people feel safe to speak up and trust that their concerns will be addressed appropriately and without delay. The *Grievance Policy* describes the process by which Textile Exchange receives, manages, and resolves grievances or disputes that may arise from stakeholders in a fair, transparent, and accountable manner. Management of complaints related to the Textile Exchange standards system is further described in the *Complaints Policy*. Any Textile Exchange staff, volunteer, or

board member who raises a safeguarding concern in good faith will be protected under our *Whistleblower Policy*.

All safeguarding reports will be promptly, thoroughly, and impartially investigated. Where allegations are substantiated, Textile Exchange will take appropriate action, offering support to survivors and ensuring that investigations are survivor-centered and trauma-informed.

Textile Exchange prioritizes the well-being and dignity of survivors. Individuals affected by safeguarding violations will be offered appropriate support, which may include specialized services as needed. Survivors will be supported to determine the type of support they receive, and every effort will be made to avoid further harm during the response process.

Monitoring and review

Textile Exchange is committed to maintaining a *Safeguarding Policy* that is effective, relevant, and responsive to emerging risks and best practices. This policy will be formally reviewed every three years, or sooner if significant changes in operations, legal requirements, or safeguarding incidents warrant an earlier update.

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we will actively seek and encourage feedback from staff, partners, and other stakeholders on our safeguarding practices and procedures. Insights gained from feedback, monitoring and evaluation activities, incident reports, and lessons learned will inform policy updates and strengthen our overall approach to safeguarding. Feedback, complaints, and general inquiries can be submitted via the Textile Exchange website textileexchange.org/feedback.

Appendix A

Special circumstances

The following scenarios have been identified as representing a higher risk in the context of working at Textile Exchange and in relation to safeguarding.

Higher-risk scenario	Vulnerabilities	Risk
Working with vulnerable populations	Children, indigenous communities, migrant workers, survivors of abuse, people with disabilities.	Power imbalances can lead to coercion, exploitation, or unintentional harm.
Engaging with communities with unequal power dynamics	Corporate-farmer relationships, NGOs and local communities, researchers and subjects.	Pressure to consent, reluctance to report concerns, or fear of retaliation.
Photographing vulnerable populations	Children, indigenous communities, migrant workers, survivors of abuse, people with disabilities.	Taking photos or collecting stories without informed consent; potential for exploitation or traumatization.
Certification and child and forced labor	Children, migrant workers and other vulnerable groups.	Child labor and forced labor or exploitation at certified site.