



# TSC Guidelines on processes and communications channels on reporting breaches of Teachers Code of Conduct

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# Introduction

The Teaching Service Commission (TSC) with support from SSEIP2, has developed these guidelines for TSC district staff to report breaches of the Teachers' Code of Conduct, in particular for school-related gender-based violence including a school staff or teacher as perpetrator.

The guidelines describe the key SRGBV concepts (chapter 1), the legal and policy framework in Sierra Leone (chapter 2), and in Chapter 3, the TSC district staff's role within this framework.

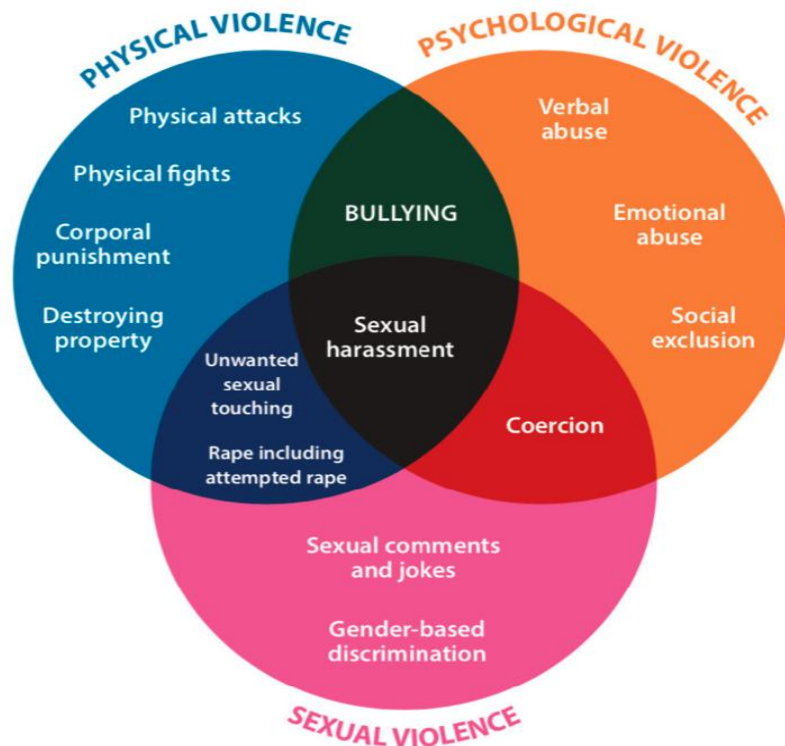
# Chapter 1. SRGBV concepts

- **Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty.
- **Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV):** It encompasses an array of acts where power is abused and can include, but is not limited to verbal harassment, inappropriate touching, assault through rape and murder. It can include sexual harassment in the workplace, sexual exploitation and abuse towards beneficiaries of aid and support. The policy and legal framework for Sierra Leone also specifically mention trafficking, violence against women in politics, child and early marriage, sexual abuse and sexual assault, adolescent pregnancy and FGM .(SGBV Response Strategy SLE).
- **School-Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV):** An act or threat of sexual, physical, or psychological violence occurring in and around schools that is perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics. It includes different types of violence in and around schools, including sexual abuse and harassment, coercion and assault and rape, as well as other forms of violence where gender is a key driving factor, such as verbal abuse and bullying (UNESCO & UN Women, 2016).
- **Sexual Exploitation:** Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.
- **Sexual Abuse** is further defined as “the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.”
- **Sexual Harassment :** Any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation’
- **Gender stereotypes:** Socially constructed and unquestioned beliefs about the different characteristics, roles and relations of women and men that are seen as true and unchangeable. Gender stereotypes are reproduced and reinforced through processes such as the education and upbringing of girls and boys, as well as the influence of media.
- **Gender discrimination** describes the situation in which people are treated differently simply because they are male or female, rather than on the basis of their individual skills or capabilities. For example, social exclusion, inability to participate in decision-making processes, and restricted access to and control of services and resources are common results of discrimination.
- **Gender Equality** means that women and men, girls and boys enjoy the same status in society; have the same entitlements to all human rights; enjoy the same level of respect

in the community; can take advantage of the same opportunities to make choices about their lives; and have the same amount of power to shape the outcomes of these choices.

- **Gender Equity:** Gender equity means being fair to women and men, girls and boys. To ensure fairness, measures are put into place to address social or historical discrimination and disadvantages faced by girls relative to boys.

**Figure1. Different forms of SRGBV**



## Chapter 2. Legal and Policy Frameworks

The following acts make the pillars of the SRGBV response in Sierra Leone legal framework:

- **Child Rights Act (CRA) 2007:** provides for the promotion of the rights of the child compatible with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).
- **Domestic Violence Act, 2007-** provides protection for survivors of DV and other related matters. Addresses issues of sexual, physical, emotional, psychological and economic violence.
- **The Sexual Offences Act 2012 and its Amendment (2019)-** Sexual offences committed against individuals and children. Protection from sexual offenders, increase of maximum penalty for rape, and SP.

- **Criminal's Procedures Act: 1965:** Deposition of medical practitioner may be read as evidence. If a medical certificate has been attested by the magistrate, in the presence of a perpetrator, it can be used as evidence.

## 1. National Referral Protocol (2024)

The National Referral Protocol (NRP) is a multi-sector government document, to support and strengthen School Safety Systems that create pathways for all students to safely report and to receive support and service linkages in response to cases of SRGBV (which includes psychological, physical and sexual violence in schools and around schools). It explains how to report and respond to cases of SGBV experienced by women and girls, men and boys, and people with disabilities.

It includes four key steps, but the first two steps are the ones relevant to TSC district staff: 1) A report is made and 2) Referrals are made to ensure immediate needs are met.

### Step 1. A report is made

Reports can be made to any person, official or not, e.g. teachers, head teachers, health workers, police officers, hotlines, etc.

**Goal:** Ensure reporting is accessible, safe and confidential. Any report is referred immediately to the appropriate next service to take timely action.

*Existing reporting mechanisms: hotlines (e.g. 112, 116, 8060), FSO, OSC, schools, health centres, police. Survivors could use these or other safe option.*

### Immediate Action

- Any service provider (including TSC staff member) that the survivor tells about their experience of sexual abuse has a responsibility to provide honest and complete information about services available and to make sure the survivor has support throughout the process.
- Informed consent/assent should be sought from the survivor (and caregiver in case of child survivors) before providing services. **No action should be taken without the expressed permission of the survivor/ care giver within the limits of the law.**
- Find out if she/he is injured and in need of emergency medical care.
- The child should receive equal and fair treatment regardless of their age, gender, ability/disability, etc.
- Ensure the survivor knows that the school authorities believe their account of what happened and that it is open and willing to support them.
- Follow the appropriate reporting protocol (NRP) while maintaining confidentiality and limited information sharing on a need-to-know basis. Inform the child of this reporting protocol and discuss concerns before sharing any information.



- Try to establish whether the child knows the perpetrator and whether that person is a staff member of TSC or otherwise affiliated with the institution.
- Start to keep a confidential log of all communications and decisions for the response process with the survivor's consent.

## Step 2. Referrals are made to ensure immediate needs are met

The immediate services accessed, and in what order, depends on the incident and needs of the survivor. Services must include medical or health care, psychosocial support, case management, legal aid, and police.

**Goal:** Ensure that (i) immediate care and needs of the survivor are met; (ii) evidence can be collected; and (iii) appropriate referrals to, or signposting of, other services can be made.

*Survivors need professional support and case management for immediate referrals, safe access to services, evidence collection and coordination of services.*

### What to do within 24-72 hrs:

- If the alleged perpetrator is a school staff, make arrangements to remove the alleged perpetrator from any environment where they could pose a risk to the other children.
- Make referrals: With the survivor's/caregiver's consent/, reach out to medical and psychological service providers through the e-referral pathway ([www.sl.erefer.org](http://www.sl.erefer.org)) or local service providers map/network previously identified and with whom the school has agreement (preferably).
- Organise transportation for the survivor if there is a need to travel for medical assessment and care.
- Accompany the survivor and provide them with support if they choose to report the incident to the police, the OSC or the Rainbo Centre.
- If the alleged perpetrator is a staff member, suspend all their work activities/targets if the allegations are severe.  
Ensure that the alleged perpetrator is treated in a neutral manner and, arrange for an independent trained Investigator to ask them about the incident.

TSC District staff are in charge of case management for administrative purposes, in parallel to the police investigation and Justice System.

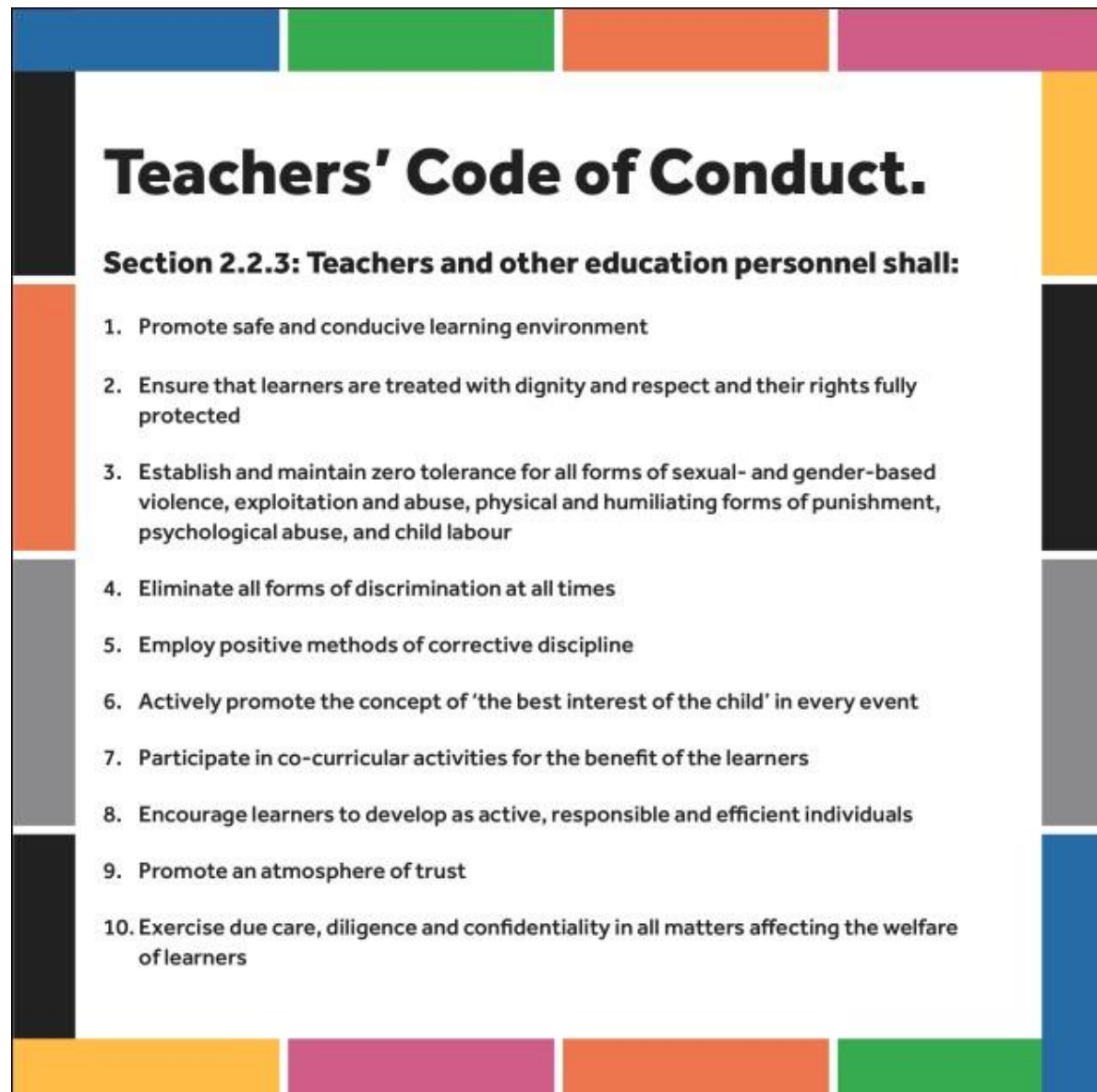
## 2. Comprehensive School Safety Policy (2023)

This policy provides an overarching multi-sectoral framework that guides school safety and child safeguarding. The policy is formulated around three pillars: (i) Safe School facilities and learning environment; (ii) Disaster risk reduction in schools; and (iii) Protection from violence and other forms of abuse and harm in and around school. The last pillar introduces the

Teachers Code of Conduct and School Safety Committees (see two sections below).

### 3. Teachers Code of Conduct

The Teachers' Code of Conduct sets out the expectations of professional standards to be met by teachers in and out of learning environments. It is a legal document with clear roles and responsibilities:



**Teachers' Code of Conduct.**

**Section 2.2.3: Teachers and other education personnel shall:**

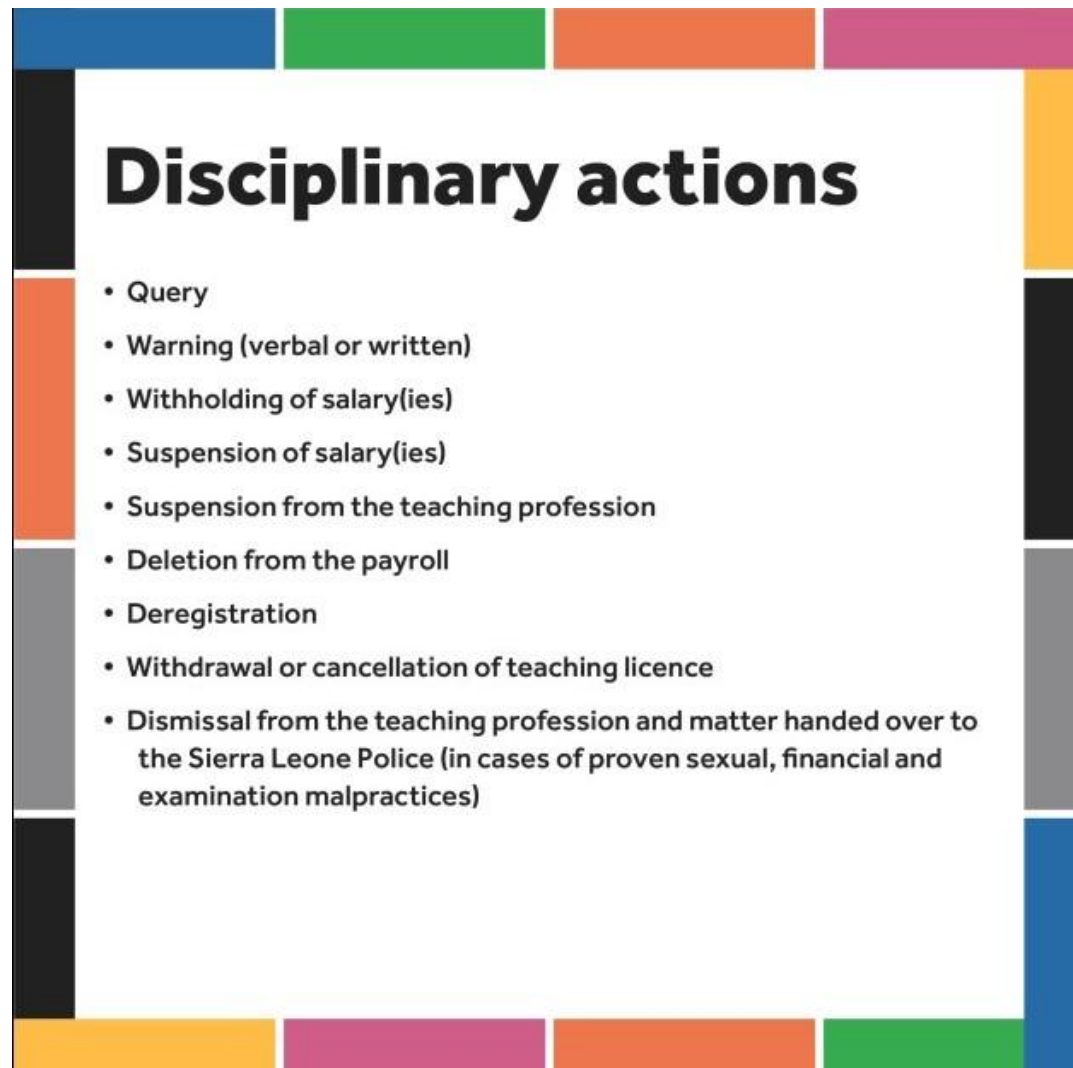
1. Promote safe and conducive learning environment
2. Ensure that learners are treated with dignity and respect and their rights fully protected
3. Establish and maintain zero tolerance for all forms of sexual- and gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse, physical and humiliating forms of punishment, psychological abuse, and child labour
4. Eliminate all forms of discrimination at all times
5. Employ positive methods of corrective discipline
6. Actively promote the concept of 'the best interest of the child' in every event
7. Participate in co-curricular activities for the benefit of the learners
8. Encourage learners to develop as active, responsible and efficient individuals
9. Promote an atmosphere of trust
10. Exercise due care, diligence and confidentiality in all matters affecting the welfare of learners

Major violations of the Code of Conduct include any type of sexual harassment or sexual violence, but also severe corporal punishment and financial malpractices.



## 4. Disciplinary actions

Breach of the Code of Conduct especially proven sexual and financial malpractices may lead to any or a combination of any of the following disciplinary actions:



**In addition, perpetrators of sexual violence will be added to the National Register for SRGBV perpetrators.**

It is mandatory for the Head teacher and School Safety Committee to report serious misconduct (e.g., drug abuse, extreme corporal punishment, sexual harassment, sexual violence, etc) to the police and the TSC District office.

## 5. School Safety Committee<sup>1</sup>

Every Primary or Secondary school in Sierra Leone should have a School Safety Committee (SSC) composed of the school leaders, some teachers and some parents/community representatives, to respond to reports of violence in school.

The SSC's mandate is explained in the below diagram:

**Figure 2. The School Safety Committee**



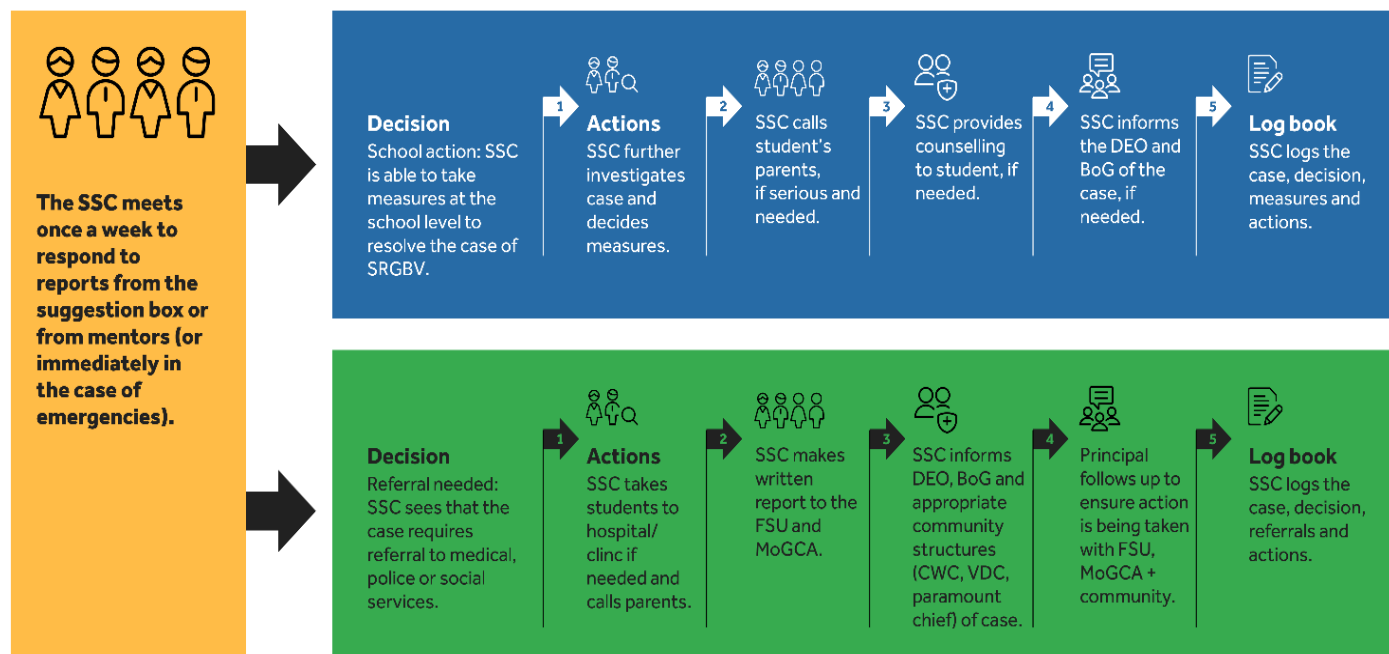
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<sup>1</sup> Reducing Violence in School Guide, MBSSE

The School Safety Committee Review process is explained in the below diagram:

Figure 3. SSC's review process

## Review



## Chapter 3. Your role as TSC district staff

### 1. TSC's role as per the NRP

The Teaching Service Commission (TSC) will:

- Train teachers on appropriate behaviours including child safeguarding.
- Monitor and supervise teachers' commitment to work and towards all learners' safety in class and school.
- Strengthen partnership with MBSSE Gender Unit to ensure school safety Committees exist and are functional in schools.
- Ensure collaboration with relevant MDAs and school and community school structures that deal with SRGBV effective service provision.
- Partner with MBSSE to enforce radical inclusion policy in schools.
- Ensure effective implementation of the Teachers' CoC.
- Ensure referrals of SRGBV matters to appropriate institutions.

- Ensure timely decision making and take disciplinary action against teachers alleged to have abused pupils.
- Popularize TCoC and ensure it is upheld by teachers.
- Enforce punishment for teachers who breach the TCoC.
- Monitor and prepare reports and disseminate with the relevant MBSSE Directorates on the implementation of the TCoC.
- Report and make follow ups on SRGBV cases that occur within the school environment.
- Support police investigations while teacher is on suspension for any crime that involves a teacher.
- Enforce punishment of teachers based on the outcome of police investigation.
- Ensure punishment for teachers by withholding their salaries and or terminate services of perpetrators of sexual abuse as well as drug abuse.
- Immediately report cases of abuse to the 116, the FSU/Police and appropriate channels.
- Ensure schools have effective and functional systems to protect children from violence, abuse and exploitation.

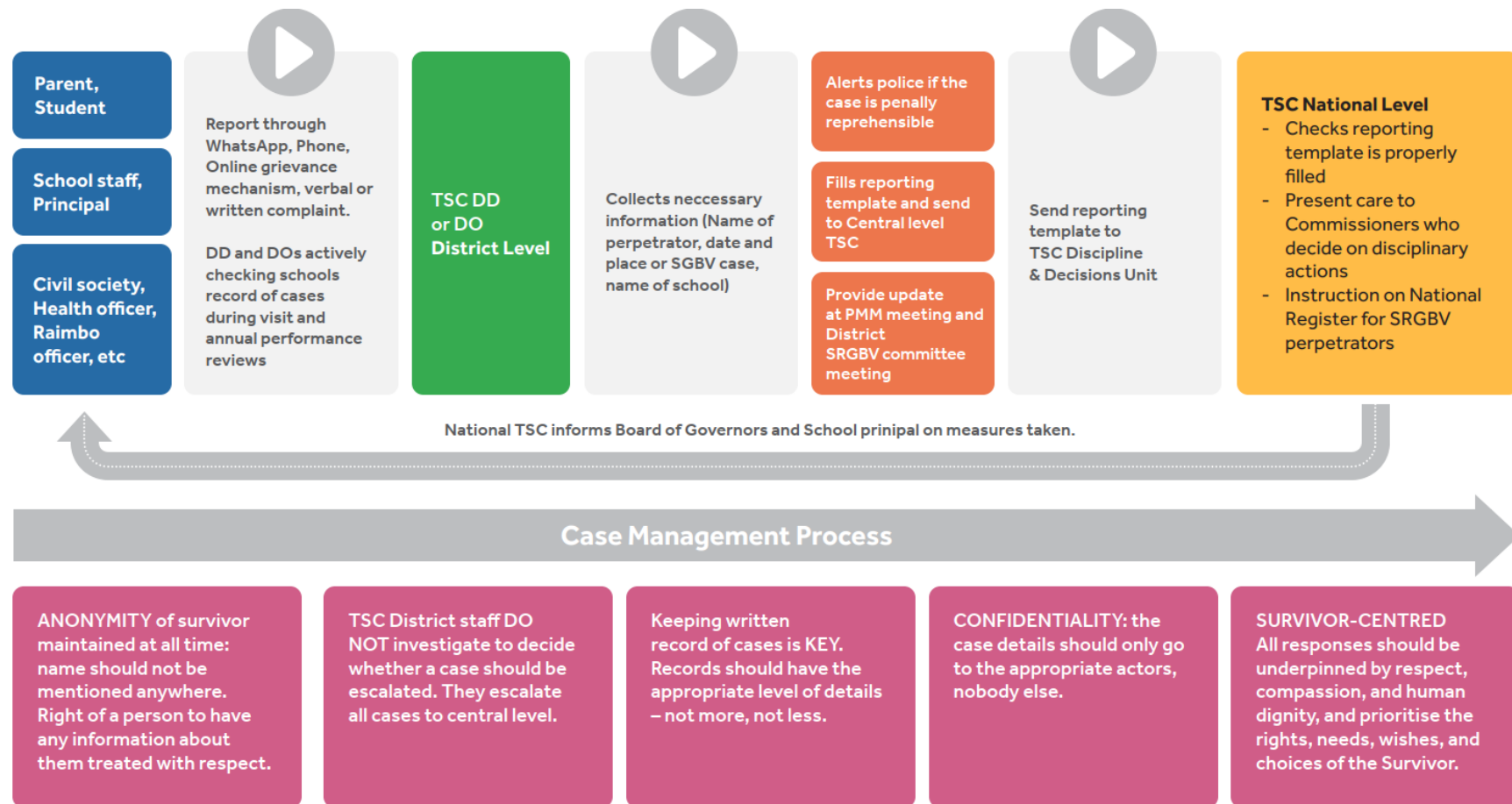
## 2. Key principles

1. **Survivor centred:** All responses should be underpinned by respect, compassion, and human dignity, and prioritise the rights, needs, wishes, and choices of the survivor while upholding confidentiality.
2. **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality refers to the right of a person to have any information about them treated with respect. It promotes safety, trust and empowerment. This includes making sure permission is obtained from the survivor before sharing information, that only details that are relevant are shared, and only with the permission of the survivor, and that Case information is stored securely .
3. **Informed consent:** The voluntary agreement of an individual who has the legal capacity to give consent. The survivor must have the capacity and maturity to know about and understand the services being offered and be legally able to give her consent.
4. **Right to dignity and self-determination:** SGBV is an assault on the dignity and rights of a person, and all those who come into contact with survivors have a role to play in restoring dignity and self-determination. This means adopting a validating, non-blaming and non-judgmental approach, valuing the survivor and caring about their experience, history and future and allowing survivor to make their own decisions.
5. **Right to safety:** ‘Safety’ refers to both physical safety and security, as well as to a sense of psychological and emotional safety for people who are highly distressed.
6. **Non-discrimination:** All people have the right to the best possible assistance without unfair discrimination on the basis of gender, age, disability, race, colour, language, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation or social class.

### 3. TSC District staff reporting process

TSC District staff must follow the below process when being informed of a potential case of violence involving a school staff.

Figure 4. Reporting process diagram



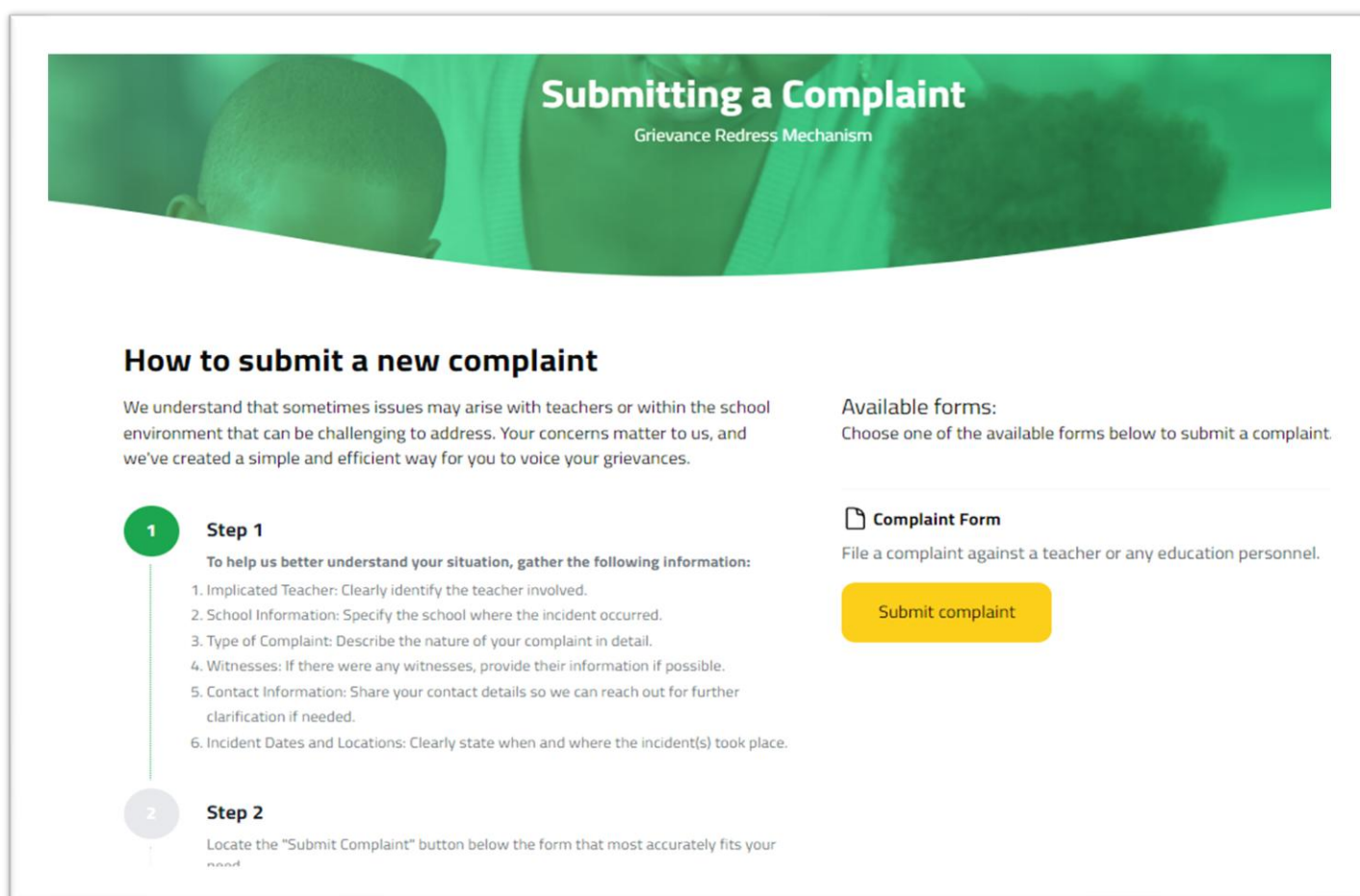
## 4. TSC Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)

If District TSC staff have internet access, complaints should be submitted on the TSC Grievance Redress Mechanism, which is located in the Teacher Management Information System and can be accessed at: <https://tsctmis.org/complaints>

This form is for any person to file a complaint against a teacher or education personnel. This form asks about personal details of the person submitting the complaint, details of the complaint and of the accused person.

Complaints are welcome from any type of person, for example a pupil, a parent, another teacher, or anyone who has knowledge of inappropriate conduct.

TSC district staff can also receive complaints from the public and upload them into the GRM for the National Commission to handle it – see screenshot below.



The screenshot displays the 'Submitting a Complaint' page of the TSC Grievance Redress Mechanism. The page features a green header with the title 'Submitting a Complaint' and the subtitle 'Grievance Redress Mechanism'. Below the header, there is a section titled 'How to submit a new complaint' which includes an introductory paragraph and a list of six steps for gathering information. To the right of the steps, there is a section titled 'Available forms:' with a link to the 'Complaint Form' and a yellow 'Submit complaint' button.

### Submitting a Complaint

Grievance Redress Mechanism

#### How to submit a new complaint

We understand that sometimes issues may arise with teachers or within the school environment that can be challenging to address. Your concerns matter to us, and we've created a simple and efficient way for you to voice your grievances.

1


**Step 1**  
To help us better understand your situation, gather the following information:

1. Implicated Teacher: Clearly identify the teacher involved.
2. School Information: Specify the school where the incident occurred.
3. Type of Complaint: Describe the nature of your complaint in detail.
4. Witnesses: If there were any witnesses, provide their information if possible.
5. Contact Information: Share your contact details so we can reach out for further clarification if needed.
6. Incident Dates and Locations: Clearly state when and where the incident(s) took place.

2

**Step 2**  
Locate the "Submit Complaint" button below the form that most accurately fits your need

**Available forms:**  
Choose one of the available forms below to submit a complaint.

 **Complaint Form**

File a complaint against a teacher or any education personnel.

Submit complaint



## 5. TSC Reporting tool

The TSC reporting tool must be filled for all cases reported to TSC staff, if they cannot be reported through the Grievance Redress mechanism because of lack of internet connectivity. A separate excel sheet must be used to fill the details.

Details to be filled:

- Case description
- Status: action taken and proposed next steps
- District
- Chiefdom
- City/Town/ Village
- Date of assault (if known)
- Location where the incident occurred
- Source of complaint
- Recorded in the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) online tool: yes/no
- Date if recorded in GRM
- Gender of survivor
- Schooling level of survivor
- Age of survivor
- Type of incident
- Perpetrator
- Police / FSU involved: yes/no
- Current status of perpetrator

Below is an example of the tool, which can be accessed in full in Excel format.

[illegible]