

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY
“Hope For Children” CRC Policy Center
(here in after “The Organization”)

Whereas the Organization is an independent, international and humanitarian organization with its headquarters in Cyprus,

And,

Whereas the Organization is entirely dedicated to the promotion, protection and respect of the rights of the child,

And,

Whereas the Organization aims to advocate and to protect children’s rights based on the standards and principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and European Union law and principles,

And,

Whereas the Organization bases its vision and mission on the principle of ensuring the best interests of the child in all actions affecting children,

And,

Whereas the Organization fully endorses the principle of no discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth, sexual orientation or other status.

The Organization adopts the following policy on child protection,

The Organization is determined to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to protect children and young people from harm and/or any other impairment or damage. This policy establishes the Organization’s role and principles and regulates the behaviour and approach expected by the staff members be it an integral part of their professional life.

PREAMBLE

The Organization adheres to the principles enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the Council of Europe Convention on Human Rights and all relevant international, regional and domestic instruments on human rights and the rights of the child and expects all adults involved in the Organization to fully encompass and realize the principles enshrined therein.

Every child and young person who is a beneficiary or is otherwise involved in the Organization's activities should be able to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm.

The Organization recognizes its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people by protecting them from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect, bullying or any other form of maltreatment. To this end, every person acting on behalf of or in cooperation with the Organization is obliged to adhere to this policy.

PART I: DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of the present policy, the following definitions apply:

Best Interest of the Child (BIC)

It has to be applied as a threefold concept which includes a substantive right, a fundamental and interpretative legal principle and a rule of procedure aiming to ensure the full and effective enjoyment of all the rights recognised in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the holistic development of the child. It should be duly considered in all actions concerning the child and should be assessed and determined on an individual basis taking into consideration the specific situation of the child or group of children concerned, their personal context, needs and views.

Child

Every human being below the age of eighteen years old.

Child Protection

Any systematic or individual measure to prevent and respond to any form of abuse or harm towards children as individuals, in general or as a particular group. Acknowledging the challenges faced by young people in transition to adulthood and an autonomous life, additional support and services may be also provided to persons who have reached the age of 18 years old taking into consideration their special needs.

Child participation

In principle it means that children have the right to freely express their views and the right to have their views given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. Meaningful participation implies accurate information-sharing and dialogue based on mutual respect taking into consideration the particular circumstances and the child's age.

Staff members

Refers to paid staff, volunteers, interns and associates.

Physical child abuse

Physical abuse is an injury deliberately inflicted upon a child by any person.

Child emotional abuse

It refers to repeated emotional mistreatment of a child and can involve deliberately scaring, humiliating, isolating or ignoring a child.

Child Sexual Abuse (definition in Art.18.1 Lanzarote Convention)

Engaging in sexual activities with a child who, according to the relevant provisions of the national law, has not reached the legal age for sexual activities; engaging in sexual activities with a child using coercion, force or threats; or abuse is made of a recognised position of trust, authority or influence over the child including within the family; or abuse is made of a particularly vulnerable situation of the child, notably because of a mental or physical disability or a situation of dependence.

Child pornography (definition in Art.20.2 Lanzarote Convention)

Any material that visually depicts a child engaged in real or simulated sexually explicit conduct or any depiction of a child's sexual organs for primarily sexual purposes.

Neglect or negligent treatment

Omissions which deprive the child of essential needs, may they be physical, emotional or from a legal/ administrative nature.

Child Exploitation

Using children for a third person's profit or advantage often resulting to unlawful and harmful treatment of the child.

PART II: GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1: Promoting and safeguarding the welfare of every child is of utmost concern for the Organization and its members.

Article 2: All children regardless of age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or other status have the right to be protected from harm and all staff members should fully respect, protect and promote their rights.

Article 3: All actions affecting the child's life will take into consideration the best interest of the child.

Article 4: Children will be given the opportunity to have their views heard and be given due weight in all matters affecting their life.

Article 5: All staff members will be adequately trained in order to work with the Organization's beneficiaries.

Article 6: All suspicions and allegations of abuse or/and exploitation will be taken seriously and prompt response will follow in accordance with the relevant laws and the Organization's aims.

Article 7: The Organization is committed to protecting the personal data of children in full compliance with the EU and national legislation. All personal information regarding children, including digital data such as video or photographic materials, are only collected and processed according to the specific projects' purposes and needs or other applicable regulation. Their data are stored safely on the local server of the Organization and are accessible only by the staff who have been given permission and respective credentials.

Article 8: Staff members are obliged to report concerns about any type of child abuse or/and exploitation to their supervisor or head of department as soon as those concerns have been brought to their attention in full compliance with the internal procedures of the Organization.

Article 9: The Organization will conduct regular monitoring to assess compliance with child protection policies and procedures. Monitoring will examine areas such as staff and volunteer training uptake, safe recruitment practices, reporting procedures, incident management and risk assessments.

PART III: Rules and Conduct for staff members

Article 10: Staff members are asked to come in direct contact with children and young people while performing their duties. Their duties include but are not limited to counselling services, provision of social, legal or psychological support, response to calls to the helplines and hotlines run by the Organization, working in the Organization's children's shelters or delivering child friendly workshops and conducting research on projects related to children's rights.

Article 11: Staff members will receive a copy of the child protection policy upon their arrival at the workplace, as this policy forms an integral part of their contract, learning or partnership agreement. The Code of Conduct, the Internal Procedures and the Privacy Policy will be also received by every new staff member and may be considered as annexes to this policy.

Article 12: In addition, a declaration of confidentiality should be provided to and signed by every staff member.

Article 13: During the provision of services to a child or family, the staff members should assess the needs and promptly refer to third parties in compliance with the internal and department procedures of the Organization i.e. psychiatric services of the government, medical professionals,

labour service etc. Due consideration should be given in obtaining prior written informed consent by the parents or legal guardians.

Article 14: Staff members should not undertake any investigations themselves but refer evidence to the competent authorities, for example the Social Welfare Services and/or the Police.

Article 15: Staff have a duty to ensure they understand all safeguarding information provided to them, including the Code of Conduct, the Internal Procedures, the Privacy Policy and this policy, as well as any updates issued by the Organization.

PART IV: Hiring procedure and training of staff members

Article 16: The Organization will only recruit candidates who are deemed suitable for the respective position based on objective criteria and respecting the principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunities.

Article 17: Staff members are requested to submit to the Organization a certificate of clean criminal record and a certificate of clean criminal record in relation to sexual abuse or/and exploitation against children, as requested by the national Law.

Article 18: References given by the candidate may be further assessed if doubted, by directly contacting the referral person.

Article 19: At least two different staff members from the Management team need to review the candidates' applications and conduct an interview with them. Following the interviewers' consensus, a job offer will be sent to the personal email address which the candidate has provided.

Article 20: All staff members will participate in comprehensive initial children's rights and child protection policy trainings designed by the Organization adjusted particularly for the needs of the respective position. Further opportunities are given to staff members for service training delivered either by the Organization or other national or EU and international entities such as the Council of Europe and UNHCR.

Article 21: All staff members are expected to perform their duties identifying and responding to cases of child abuse and/or exploitation in alignment with the definitions provided in PART I

alongside the internal procedures of the Organization and the instructions of their direct Supervisor.

PART V: Reporting Mechanisms

The Organization sets out below the actions required of all persons involved in the Organization when a child or young person discloses abuse, or when abuse is suspected or reported by someone other than the child.

Article 22: If a child discloses abuse, you should:

- a. React calmly and allow a free narration of the incident
- b. Reassure the child that they were right to tell and that they are not to blame.
- c. Be careful not to be deemed as putting words into the child's mouth, by asking indicative questions (i.e. instead of "why", use "how").
- d. Explain the meaning of confidentiality and when you lawfully need to breach this duty (when the child is at risk of harm, witness harm or pose a risk to someone else).
- e. Inform the child/ young person what you will do next.
- f. Make a full and written record of what has been said as soon as possible and transfer it without delay to your immediate supervisor.

Article 23: In cases of concerns or allegations of abuse within the Organization:

- a. Any staff member who suspects of a child being abused or mistreated by staff must inform their immediate supervisor as soon as they become aware
- b. The first response to all disclosures, suspicions, allegations, must take place without undue delay
- c. Must clarify the type of safeguarding concern or abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, economic or other exploitation, breach of code of conduct) and the details of the person who may have suffered harm, further details of concern or incident, what action, if any, has already been taken and by whom
- d. Any person against whom an allegation has been made may be suspended during the investigation period and any necessary safeguarding measures will be taken upon conclusion of the investigation, including termination

- e. Allegations that are criminal will be reported to the authorities in consultation with management
- f. Allegations that are not criminal but involve a breach the code of conduct or child protection policy will trigger internal investigations
- g. If the complaint is proven, depending on the gravity, outcomes may include suspension, dismissal, monitoring, and/or further training
- h. If the complaint is false, unsubstantiated, unproven, unfounded, outcomes may include support to the alleged perpetrator, training, and/or monitoring
- i. There will be no action taken against anyone who reports a concern in good faith that, following investigation, proved unfounded
- j. The Organization will ensure timely assessment, investigation (where applicable), and follow-up, ensuring the safety of the child. After each case, a case review process will be undertaken to identify improvements in policy, training, or practice, if necessary.

Article 24: All reports are written on the Organization’s letterhead and should include:

- a. The child’s known details, including name, date of birth, address and contact numbers.
- b. Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- c. The nature of the allegation, including dates, times, specific factors and any other relevant information.
- d. Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- e. A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also, any indirect signs, such as behavioral changes.
- f. Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- g. The child’s accountability, if any.
- h. The Organization’s immediate actions and proposals for the management of the case, if possible.

PART IV: COOPERATION WITH ORGANIZATIONS:

Article 25: The affiliation and partnerships with other Organizations and Agencies is considered essential part of the Organization's work.

Article 26: The Organization will take into consideration the child protection policy and personal data protection policy of the Organizations which are invited to partnerships.

FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 27: Any staff member breaching this document may face disciplinary actions up to terminating the professional relationship with the Organization and even referral to the authorities.

Article 28: This policy document as well as the Code of Conduct will be reviewed by the Child Protection Department regularly and distributed to the staff if altered.


This policy has been reviewed and approved by:




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Director-General


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