



# CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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## 1. Introduction

HOST International (HOST) recognises that by the nature of our work internationally, our operations may pose a risk to children; therefore, we have developed this Child Safeguarding Policy (Policy) to proactively work to mitigate those risks. In line with our values of respect, compassion, innovation, integrity and diversity we will work, through the implementation of this child safeguarding policy, to address the denial of children's protection rights and ensure that children are not harmed in any way as a result of their involvement in our work.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the foundation of HOST's work on child safeguarding. Children's rights as enshrined in the (CRC) act as the motivation for both our internal and external child protection measures and activities.

## 2. Statement on commitment to child safeguarding

HOST is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children. We support the rights of children and will act to ensure a child safe environment is maintained. HOST is committed to the protection of children from harm, abuse and exploitation.

Children have a right to survival, development, protection and participation as stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (UNCRC). HOST will uphold these rights. HOST takes its duty of care seriously and will aim at all times to provide the safest possible programs and environments for children. This will be achieved by identifying and managing risks that may lead to harm of children.

HOST has a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse. HOST is committed to taking all necessary steps to ensure that all children and young people with whom we work (both here in Australia and overseas in our development programs) are provided a child safe environment at all times.

This Policy demonstrates our commitment to ensuring the protection of children and young people at all times. HOST will provide all personnel who have contact with children the necessary training and skills to implement this Policy with the assistance of the HOST child safeguarding working group. It is ultimately the responsibility of managers to ensure that this Policy and any related documents are implemented and enforced throughout HOST.

## 3. Purpose of this Policy

- 3.1 This Policy outlines HOST's commitment to protect children from harm and abuse.
- 3.2 This Policy and additional procedures have been developed to provide a practical guide to prevent child abuse in HOST's programs and outline a range of risk management strategies that will be implemented to reduce the risk of children being harmed.
- 3.3 This Policy aims to educate all HOST staff and others about child abuse and promote a child safe culture where everyone is committed to keeping children safe.
- 3.4 This Policy provides guidance on how to respond to concerns and allegations of child abuse. The Policy also provides guidance to staff and others on how to work respectfully and effectively with children.
- 3.5 HOST is obliged to adhere to state, federal and international child protection legislation, which prohibit the abuse and exploitation of children. These include laws where HOST programs exist, and international laws and Conventions in relation to all forms of child abuse and child exploitation, including child sex tourism, child sex trafficking, child labour and child pornography.

## 4. Guiding principles

- 4.1 HOST believes that any form of child abuse and exploitation is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- 4.2 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the universal foundation for child protection. The fundamental principle of the Convention is that children have their own indivisible rights.
- 4.3 HOST believes that all children should be equally protected regardless of their gender, nationality, religious or political beliefs, age, sexual orientation, family and social background and culture, economic status, physical or mental health and criminal background.
- 4.4 HOST recognises its duty of care to take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are safe from harm.
- 4.5 HOST believes that all children have the right to be safe at all times. We will proactively work to provide safe and protective programs, activities and environments.
- 4.6 All decisions regarding the welfare and protection of children will be made based on the Best Interests of the Child Principle.
- 4.7 HOST takes seriously our duty of care and legal obligations to protect children.
- 4.8 The protection of children is the responsibility of all personnel, partners and associates of HOST.
- 4.9 Where possible, children will be consulted in the development of the CSP and the implementation of child safe practices. Children in our programs should be given opportunities to express their views on matters affecting them.
- 4.10 Adherence to this Policy is a mandatory requirement for all personnel, partners and associates of HOST.
- 4.11 HOST will ensure that all staff and relevant stakeholders are made aware of this Policy and their responsibilities
- 4.12 HOST believes that all children have a right to be safe at all times and we have an obligation to provide child safe and child friendly environments and programs.
- 4.13 HOST has a duty of care to all children that we work with in both national and international programs and services.

## 5. Scope of this Policy

- 5.1 This Policy applies to all staff and associates.
- 5.2 Staff refers to: full time, part time, international, national, senior managers, directors, consultants, contractors (including researchers, photographers etc), trainees, temporary staff and agency staff.
- 5.3 Others/associates refers to visitors to our programs (including media), volunteers, board members, students/interns, supporters (donors, sponsors, advocates, ambassadors), trustees, members, staff in partnership agencies, and any other individuals or groups that have been brought in contact with children (including their personal information and images) while working with/supporting HOST.
- 5.4 New staff will be given a copy of this Policy at their induction. Supervisors and managers will remind staff of this Policy from time to time and ensure that others/associates are aware of HOST child safeguarding policies and other related documentation.
- 5.5 Supervisors and managers also have a specific responsibility for ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements.

### **Non-contractual status of this policy**

- 5.6 This Policy is not in any way incorporated as part of any award or enterprise agreement entered into by HOST, nor does it form any part of an employee's contract of employment. HOST may amend this Policy at any time in its sole discretion.

## 6. Non-Compliance with this Policy

- 6.1 HOST takes very seriously its commitment to protecting children from harm. All staff are expected to comply with this Policy. Non-compliance may result in disciplinary action by HOST and other external bodies dependent on the conduct.

## 7. Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct (CoC)

- 7.1 HOST's Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct (CS CoC) is a clear organisational guide of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relation to working with children and young people at HOST. It establishes a common understanding of the standards of behaviour and appropriate boundaries expected of staff and other personnel to keep children safe.
- 7.2 The CS CoC also provides staff and other personnel with clear boundaries so they can ensure that they are not placing themselves at risk of a false allegation being made against them.
- 7.3 HOST's CS CoC will be signed by all stakeholders regardless of their level of contact with children.
- 7.4 HOST's CS CoC addresses:
- (a) Mandatory reporting
  - (b) Appropriate language
  - (c) Appropriate communications
  - (d) Banning of alcohol and drugs
  - (e) Gifts to children
  - (f) Physical contact with children
  - (g) Banning of sexual relations with children
  - (h) Child labour
  - (i) Photos and images
  - (j) Reporting responsibilities

## 8. Risk Assessment and Management

- 8.1 HOST recognises that there a number of potential risks to children in the delivery of our programs. In recognising these risks, HOST proactively assesses and manages risks to children in order to reduce the risk of harm. This is achieved by examining each activity and program and its potential impact on children. Activities and programs that involve direct work with children are considered a higher risk, and therefore require more stringent child safeguarding procedures. HOST recognises that by the nature of its work it is at risk of being targeted by those wanting to exploit or harm children and that there are a number of potential risks to children in the delivery of our programs.
- 8.2 Risk management is an ongoing part of all our work involving and affecting children. HOST conducts a child protection risk assessment on every activity and project involving and affecting children prior to commencement. Mitigation strategies are put in place for any risk identified and these (and any emerging risks) are actively monitored throughout the activity/program cycle.
- 8.3 Staff and other personnel (as relevant) are trained in child protection and risk assessment. They are expected to be continually aware of potential risks to children as well as to be actively minimising opportunities and situations where children can be harmed. Therefore, we undertake the following preventative measures:
- 8.4 As an organisation HOST is to always be aware, vigilant and uncompromising when implementing our Child Safeguarding Policy. Staff and others should continually be aware of risks and be actively minimising opportunities and situations where children can be harmed.
- 8.5 Child safeguarding is included in the HOST organisational risk register which is monitored by the Corporate

Governance team.

## 9. Communication and Use of Children's Images

- 9.1 HOST may use images of children for marketing/promotional material or to share a good news story or program success.
- 9.2 Informed parental consent on behalf of a child will be obtained and recorded using the HOST Image and Information Consent Form prior to any images of children being collected or used. Details will be provided as to how, where and for how long the story, information and/or image will be used, HOST will explain that once this information and/or image(s) is available on the internet they can be viewed by anyone with internet access at that time.
- 9.3 A risk assessment (with the child and their family) will be undertaken prior to the publishing of any information/story about an especially vulnerable child.
- 9.4 All photographers will be screened for their suitability, including police checks where appropriate.
- 9.5 Local cultural traditions should be assessed regarding restrictions for reproducing personal images
- 9.6 There will be no identifying information of the child used in the publication of images. This includes the child's family name, community or school name.
- 9.7 All images and information about children will be stored safely and will only be accessed by authorised personnel.

## 10. Staff recruitment and selection

HOST is committed to child safe recruitment, selection and screening practices. HOST will not knowingly engage either directly or indirectly, anyone who poses a risk to children. These practices aim to recruit the safest and most suitable people to work in our programs.

HOST child safe recruitment practices include:

- (a) Applicants will be required to submit a detailed application when applying for a position. This requires provision of extensive information about the applicant's background such as dates and places of employment, education and other activities.
- (b) Job descriptions are required for all positions (staff, volunteers, consultants short/ long term etc), which describe key selection criteria and outline tasks and accountabilities.
- (c) All staff will be required to provide proof of identify including birth certificate, passport, drivers licence and relevant qualifications. Original documents are required.
- (d) All HOST personnel, staff, volunteers, partners and project visitors will be required to read and acknowledge HOST's CSP and read and sign HOST's Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct.
- (e) Where the candidate is working directly with children in Australia, they may require a Working with Children Check. Checks equivalent to Working With Children Check will be carried out in other countries unless it is included in the Police check such as in New Zealand.
- (f) Conducting reference checks
- (g) Criminal record checks
- (h) Behavioural based questions are used in the form of scenarios to ensure awareness and ability in working with vulnerable people including children.
- (i) All positions will be subject to a probationary period depending on the length of the contract.
- (j) HOST reserves the right to refuse employment or terminate any person's employment that may pose a risk to children.
- (k) Employment contracts contain provisions for the prevention of a person working with children if they present an unacceptable risk to children. This may include suspension or transfer to other duties for any employee who is under investigation and provisions to dismiss any employee after an investigation

Criminal record checks will be conducted for all staff, regardless of whether or not they work with children. In cases where international criminal record checks cannot be completed in time or where a country does not provide criminal record checks with adequate reliability, rigorous referee checks and staff statutory declarations will be used in their place.

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify their supervisor about their concern. In situations where the supervisor is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the next highest level of supervision.

Supervisors must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the CEO/HR team and also to any external regulatory body such as the police. Further details can be found in the Child Safeguarding Reporting Procedure.

## **11. Educating HOST on child abuse and Child Safeguarding Policy**

HOST is committed to educating personnel and associates in child protection and abuse, in the CSP, in how to reduce risks and create child safe environments. We will promote child safe practices which keep children safe in the organisation and in their own community and provide information about child protection to the children and communities in which we work. This information will include reporting child abuse if they have concerns about a HOST member of staff or other representative in the organisation.

Personnel and associates (name them as relevant- such as volunteers, board members, visitors to the field etc) will be required to participate in child protection training as part of their induction. Refresher training and targeted training depending on their role or contact with children. Staff with specialist child safeguarding responsibilities will be supported to attend child safeguarding training delivered externally to stay informed of current practice.

HOST commits to undertake capacity building and training in child safeguarding with all development partners who work with us to implement programs that involve or affect children.

## **12. Working with partners**

HOST ensures that any implementing partner is a child safe organisation by including partners in the scope of HOST's child safeguarding policy and procedures. This Policy and Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct will be included in all partnership agreements and contracts.

Where a partner does not have their own Child Safeguarding Policy, CoC and procedures in place, HOST works with them to develop their own documents in line with global /donor/sector minimum standards including the ACFID Code of Conduct.

## **13. Responding and reporting child protection concerns**

It is mandatory for all personnel and associates to report any witnessed, suspected or alleged incidents of child exploitation or abuse or any breach of the CSP and / or COC. These concerns may relate to a child or a staff member involved in the organisation or a concern about a child or person/s outside of the organisation's programs. If you do have a concern you should immediately follow HOST Child Safeguarding Reporting Procedure.

- 13.1 Managing child abuse allegations can be very challenging when allegations or reports of child abuse have been made in overseas programs and communities. HOST may be faced with complex legal decisions on how they should respond to allegations of child abuse in situations where child protection laws are unclear and where law-enforcement is inadequate. HOST may also face situations in some countries where reporting child abuse to authorities may result in a child or staff member facing serious human rights violations.
- 13.2 HOST will provide strategies to manage the following difficult and complex issues that may emerge when responding to child abuse concerns in overseas programs:
- (a) the treatment that the child will receive by local authorities e.g. will the child be victimised, criminalised, forced to undergo medical checks etc
  - (b) long term support for child and family - who, how etc
  - (c) whether the child will be ostracised by its family and or community as a result of reporting the abuse;
  - (d) how the local authorities will treat the alleged perpetrator e.g. torture, death penalty, corrupt justice systems
  - (e) impact on staff and HOST's reputation
  - (f) Any of the above considerations should not be used as reasons to avoid reporting child abuse in countries where child sexual abuse/ exploitation/ physical are crimes. Child abuse is a violation of children's rights and organisations have a moral and often legal responsibility to take action.
  - (g) Any allegation considered to be a criminal offence should be reported to the local police and/or child protection authorities.
  - (h) Contact details for these authorities should be provided in HOST Program procedures and updated as necessary.
  - (i) When reporting to authorities, additional support for the child may be necessary to ensure their safety and rights (such as linking them with local community-based child protection groups, local women's organisations and/or formal social services).
  - (j) HOST programs undertake a mapping of local child protection legislation, support services and authorities. As part of this mapping, HOST staff analyse the effectiveness and safety of the services and determine who would be best to seek support from /refer children to safely.

## 14. Investigating

- 14.1 If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to conduct an investigation of this report, all staff, contractors or volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.
- 14.2 Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, HOST will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, HOST may decide to conduct such an investigation. All staff, contractors and volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.
- 14.3 Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.
- 14.4 HOST will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.
- 14.5 After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, HOST shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and / or law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, as deemed appropriate.



## 15. Responding

- 15.1 If it is alleged that a member of staff, contractor or a volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached HOST policies or its Code of Conduct the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.
- 15.2 If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of HOST policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

## 16. Review

HOST's Child Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed every two years or at any other time when required.

## 17. Types of Child Abuse and Neglect

Physical abuse	occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures
Emotional abuse	occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats. This may involve name calling, being put down or continual coldness from parent or care giver; to the extent that it affects the child's physical and emotional growth.
Neglect	is the persistent failure or the deliberate denial to provide the child with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation or supervision or care to the extent that the child's health and development are placed at risk.
Sexual abuse	occurs when a child or young person is used by an older or bigger child, adolescent or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification - regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. These can be contact or noncontact acts, including sexualised language, voyeurism, fondling genitals or breasts, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object and exposing a child to, or involving a child in pornography
Family Violence	Occurs when a person's behaviour towards family members include physical violence, threats, verbal abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, financial and social abuse. A child being forced to hear, witness or otherwise be exposed to the effects of family violence constitutes child abuse.

Exploitation	commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others that are to the detriment of the child's physical and mental health, education, or moral and social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labour, child trafficking and child sexual exploitation
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## 18. Definitions

Definitions	
A child or young person	any person under the age of 18 years, unless a nation's laws recognise adulthood earlier
Child abuse	abuse happens to male and female children of all ages, ethnicity and social backgrounds, abilities, sexual orientation, religious beliefs and political persuasion. Child abuse includes physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, bullying, child labour and family violence. Abuse can be inflicted on a child by both men and women, as well as by young people themselves and in some cases; professionals and other adults working with children in a position of trust also abuse children.
Child protection	the responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or stop children being abused or maltreated.
Child safeguarding	actions, policies and procedures that create and maintain protective environments for children including to protect them from exploitation and abuse of all kinds
Duty of care	is a common law concept that refers to the responsibility of the organisation to provide children with an adequate level of protection against harm. It is the duty of the organisation to protect children from all reasonably foreseeable risk of injury.

## 19. Related Documents and legislation

Documents
Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)
Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)
Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)
Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct
Children's Act 2014 (NZ)

Child Safeguarding Incident Reporting Procedure
Child Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form