



Updated 1/2017

General Rules & Guidelines

Individual

Each of employee and volunteer is expected to have read and signed the Child Protection or Child Safeguarding Policy for your organization. Each organization has rules for working with children that are specific to their organization. However, there are some things that individuals can do to make sure that no one misinterprets their actions:

- Always try to be visible, especially when alone with a child. Ex - have another person with you when you are in secluded locations. Remember to think about when a child is in transport such as a private vehicle. Children should have an escape route and should not be alone with an adult.
- If speaking with a child alone, maintain accountability by notifying another adult who can visually account for the meeting. This means the other adult should visually check-in multiple times during the conversation, although they will not be able to hear the discussion, ensuring privacy for the child. Therefore, the location should be highly visible, such as:
 - o a room with an uncovered window,
 - o a room with an open door, or
 - o an open area outside away from others hearing.
- As a best practice, do not enter a child's bedroom, especially with the child there. If it is necessary as a staff member, make sure the door is open and, if possible, have another adult or children present.
- While vulnerable children need healthy touch and affection from adults to mentally grow and develop, ask the child to touch them if the child has not already initiated the touch (ex- "You look sad. May I give you a hug?"). Normally, contact should be child-initiated.
- When possible and when there is no offence, give side hugs as opposed to frontal hugs – They are more visible and have a "friend" connotation.
- Do not sleep in the same areas as children who are not related to the individual.
- Do not have children come into staff or volunteer's sleeping area.
- Work through the policies of the organization for giving gifts so that it is clear there is no favoritism or buying of favors.
- Make sure there is caregiver-/parental-knowledge of "field trips," after-hour meetings, and gatherings at new settings.
- Do not promise confidentiality if keeping a secret puts the child in harm. "I can't promise not to tell if you are being hurt, but I promise to support you to find a solution."
- Children have the right to their body, so rejecting physical contact is up to them, except in exceptional circumstances where their physical safety is in immediate danger (ex- medical assistance). Even in these situations, be visible and talk out what is being done.

Organizational

- Provide regular training for adults and children on child protection and your organization's child protection safeguarding policy.
- Consider identifying specific spaces which are good locations for having private but visible talks with children.
- Consider creating signals for spaces or individuals to indicate that there is a private conversation occurring with a child and that staff should be keeping an eye out for transparency and accountability as well as ensuring the child's privacy.
- Create systems for accountability of all children at all times. This may include adult monitoring of groups, sign-out sheets, or attendance recording.
- Post simple, clear information on how a child or adult can report concerns or abuse.
- Keep confidential personal files in a locked, limited-access filing cabinet (or software program) and a locked room.
- Have practiced, simple, and clear emergency plans (lost person, fire, civil unrest, natural disaster).
- Create an easily accessible emergency contact list (directors, police, doctors, parents, embassies, etc.).
- Identify the situations most likely to be safety concerns for abuse. Then, make plans and rules to reduce probability of abuse.
- Make sure to meet minimum child protection standards [designated CPO, CP safeguarding policy, training, reporting mechanism, background screening. See CPT website for more information.]
- Allow employees to identify skills-building education that they need to better prevent abuse.
- Take every report seriously to build staff, child, and community confidence in your system.
- Recognize that there will likely be a learning curve as staff, children, and the community learn the processes and the organization's definitions of abuse and expectations of conduct. Some reports will not constitute abuse but the understanding is growing, therefore, people, especially children, may confuse experiences that are unpleasant or not desired as abuses. [ex - "I was kicked out of class – that's an abuse of my rights!"]. This is good. Use each one as a learning opportunity. You want to encourage communication and understanding.
- Be prepared for many reports initially as the system is tested and as confidence in the system builds. There will likely be a spike in reports, especially historic incidents, as well as current concerns. As the system is strengthened and has people's confidence, the number of reports should decline.