

ACTION AID AUSTRALIA ‘CHILD SAFE’ POLICY

Note: For the purposes of this policy, a child will be considered to be a person under the age of 18 years.

Mission Statement

The purpose of Action Aid Australia’s Child Safe Policy is to ensure, as far as possible, the safety of all children who are involved in Action Aid Australia’s programs and projects. The intention of this policy is to promote a culture of child safety within the organisation and to fulfil all Action Aid Australia’s legal obligations. This policy is a working document and as such will be subject to regular review and revision.

Statement of Responsibility

With the adoption of Action Aid Australia’s Child Safe Policy, 2007, Action Aid Australia affirms its commitment to the welfare of children and their protection from abuse and exploitation. Action Aid Australia upholds the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989), and in particular Article 19, which states “State Parties shall protect the child

(1) from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.”

We believe that child protection is both an organisational and an individual responsibility. Every person who shares in the work of Action Aid Australia, including Board members, specialist advisors, other members, volunteers, sponsors and supporters, also shares the responsibility to take every precaution to protect the children and families we assist.

Action Aid Australia will express its concern for the protection of children by developing policies, practices and guidelines that increase awareness of this issue and provide a framework for accountability at the organisational and individual level.

1. Action Statement

Action Aid Australia will:

- Develop, implement and review guidelines and practices that support the protection of children;

- Screen and provide orientation information to all individuals and groups visiting Action Aid Australia projects, including but not limited to Board members, sponsors, supporters, donors, volunteers and any staff ;

- Be vigilant in protecting confidential information about children and their families in Action Aid Australia projects and programs and;

- Demonstrate our responsibility to and respect for children by being sensitive in our communications that involve them.

2. Action Aid Australia – A Child Safe Organisation

Action Aid Australia is seeking to promote a child safe organisational culture that is open and dynamic. This is a culture where any staff and volunteers in Australia, donors, supporters and overseas partners and beneficiaries have a clear understanding and experience of policy and procedures in action.

3. Implementation

Implementation of the policy involves, at the very least, informing members, staff and all relevant stakeholders that the document exists issue of child protection. (However the issue of child protection will be included in all induction sessions for new staff.) The key requirements are that all staff and others are **clear about their responsibilities to prevent abuse and have access to a detailed process by which they can raise concerns.**

4. Child Abuse

4.1 Definitions and terms

Child abuse is a general term used about situations where the child may experience harm. It may include both actions and omissions on the part of the parent or carer and is usually categorised into four (4) main forms: physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect.

4.1.1 Physical abuse

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.

4.1.2 Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is a persistent attack on a child or young person's self-esteem. It can take the form of name calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating, or isolating the child or young person.

4.1.3 Neglect

Neglect is the failure to provide or intentional withholding from a child the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, and supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development are at risk.

4.1.4 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is when a child or young person is used by a child, adolescent or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification, or for economic gain.

5. Action Aid Australia's commitment as a Child Safe Organisation

Action Aid Australia commits itself to a number of processes to safeguard the children in its programs. These are:

5.1 Background checks

All Board members, ordinary members, volunteers or staff who are likely to come into contact with children from Action Aid Australia's projects or programs will be required beforehand to submit a current Working with Children (WWC) Check (if they normally reside in Victoria) or will be asked to sign an Authority for a Police Check to be conducted. Volunteers and any staff will be monitored by the Action Aid Australia Board/Board member to whom they report to ensure that proper processes are being maintained in relation to confidential information concerning sponsorship projects or sponsored children. If there are concerns, the Board must be informed. The Board will ensure that any relevant action is undertaken.

5.2 Training and Development

Board members will keep abreast with current standards in Child protection through ongoing, appropriate training and development.

5.3 Raising and reporting concerns of child abuse

The possibility of AAA members, volunteers, donors, specialist advisors, staff (if any) or partners abusing children is something that AAA takes seriously. AAA will take all steps possible, within its organisation, to prevent abuse and hold accountable those who abuse children.

5.3.1 Incident reporting

Any incident, belief or suspicion of abuse (past or present) by an AAA member, specialist advisor, volunteer, sponsor, donor or other partner must be reported immediately in writing to the **Board Chairperson**. If a child reports an incident to you, the child/young person must be taken seriously and listened to carefully.

5.3.2 Distance the alleged perpetrator

Where an incident is alleged to have occurred, the alleged perpetrator will be prohibited from any contact with the child until the matter is resolved.

5.3.3 Document the incident

As soon as possible (and no longer than 24 hours after the disclosure of the incident) the person receiving the disclosure needs to have fully documented the allegation, including the time, place and witnesses to the incident.

5.3.4 Confidentiality

5.3.5 All allegations of child abuse will be handled with the utmost confidentiality. When concerns arise, all participants will be directed through a formal complaints process involving the AAA Board.

5.4 Allegations made overseas

If an allegation is made of an AAA member, specialist advisor, volunteer, supporter, staff member (if any) or someone else representing AAA, the following procedure will apply:

5.4.1 Incident reporting

Any incident which involves an Australian AAA member, volunteer, advisor, staff member (if any) or donor, must be reported to the AAA Board Chairperson and confirmed in writing. The Chairperson will also consult with relevant 'overseas partner' stakeholders, where necessary to ensure due process is followed.

6. Privacy and Confidentiality – Board Members and Staff (if any)

Personal information related to the children AAA sponsors should be kept securely and should not be shared with any unauthorised person/s. No material transmitted to sponsors or other people outside AAA office or Board should contain any information indicating the children's place of residence (temporary or permanent). All Board members, staff (if any) and volunteers are required to refer and adhere to AAA's Privacy and Confidentiality policies to ensure that the privacy of children is protected.

7. Child Information Security

AAA will take every reasonable precaution to protect child information, progress reports, and photographs from falling into the hands of individuals who do not share AAA's commitment to the protection of children. AAA will maintain its sponsored children files in as secure an environment as is practicable and every caution will be exercised to ensure security.

8. Use of Child Photos and Information

Pictures, images or other likenesses of children and /or information related to children that could compromise their care and protection will not be made available through any form of communication media without proper protection and understanding of their use. Moreover, any images of children should not be accompanied by any information relating to their place of residence. Images, with corresponding text, which may identify a child should be pixillated or removed.

9. Sponsor Visits/Project Visits

This policy will apply to all visits to all projects supported by AAA by board members, volunteers, sponsors, advisors, staff where appropriate at all times.

10. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually in line with accepted best practice.