



AHDS' Child Protection Policy

Definitions

Child Protection: refers to the actions taken in order to prevent or stop all behaviors considered dangerous for the physical and psychological health of children (under the age of 18), particularly arising from child abuse or neglect.

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm.

Goal

AHDS is committed to the prevention of abuse, acting in the best interest of the children and ensure any disclosures about alleged abuse are acknowledged and appropriate action taken to ensure the safety of children.

Principles

1. Taking into account, in all of our planning and activities, the interests and wellbeing of children.
2. Respecting the rights, wishes and feelings of the children with whom we are working.
3. Respecting the international child convention.
4. Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from neglect and physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse.
5. Responding to all suspicions and allegations of abuse swiftly and appropriately.

Procedures

1. The Director in the main office and Provincial Managers in the field hold the responsibility for child protection in AHDS.
2. AHDS ensures that all staff working with children, both paid and voluntary, have been appropriately vetted (criminal record checks) concerning child abuse.
3. AHDS ensures that members of staff, paid and voluntary are trained to recognize child abuse and child protection at a level appropriate to their position.
4. Positive relationships must be maintained with agencies that can support in child protection related matters.
5. Breastfeeding place should be provided for the female staff that has under-two children.
6. If a member of staff has a child protection concern then they must inform immediate supervisor or the designated persons as soon as possible.
7. Any suspicions and allegations of child abuse by a member of staff must be taken seriously and handled in a manner which best ensures children's immediate and long-term safety.
8. The designated person for child protection must immediately ensure that the suspected individual does not have any contact with the child making the allegation.
9. If there is insufficient evidence to pursue a criminal prosecution, then a disciplinary investigation may still be undertaken if there is "reasonable cause to suspect" that abuse may have occurred.
10. If the police decide to undertake a criminal investigation then the member of staff may be suspended, without prejudice, as a precautionary measure.

Reporting guidelines

1. Reporting suspected or actual child abuse is mandatory for all staff, volunteers, consultants and sub-contractors.
2. Any concerns, allegations or disclosures must be recorded in writing, signed and dated, and communicated as soon as possible.
3. Records should be detailed and precise, focusing on what was said or observed, who was present and what happened. Speculation and interpretation should be clearly distinguished from reporting.
4. Any concern, disclosure or allegation is alleged rather than proven at this point. All such records should be treated as extremely confidential.
5. In certain instances, there will be the obligation for AHDS and its staff to report concerns to the appropriate external bodies.

Responding to concerns

1. The best interests of the child and the desire to secure the best outcomes for the child should always govern decisions regarding what action should be taken in response to concerns.
2. The management committee, will ultimately decide what sanctions will be taken against breaches.
3. Some concerns may be so serious that they would have to be reported to local authorities and police.

Child Protection Code of Conduct

1. Treat children with respect regardless of race, color, gender, language, religion, political, opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
2. Not use language or behavior towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
3. Not engage children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual activity.
4. Wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children.
5. Never to exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material through any medium (camera, mobile etc.).
6. Not use physical punishment on children.
7. Not hire children for labor which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.
8. Comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming a child.
9. Ensure photographs and films present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner.

This policy is drafted by the management committee on 29th Nov 2015 and approved by the Board of Directors on 25 Jan 2016.