



World Outreach International (WOI) Child Safety Policy

This policy statement is supported by Standards of Screening, Enquiry, Administrative action, Child care and Training.

The motive for this policy is to take a proactive stance toward the protection of children related to any WOI ministry; that is the children, to whom we minister, and the children and families with whom we minister.

WOI takes its responsibility to protect and nurture children seriously, creating a safe and positive environment in which to grow. We believe it is never acceptable for any child to experience abuse of any kind. Protection of children is the responsibility of every adult within our organization.

This policy applies to all WOI personnel; Mission Partners (including Seconded In or Out, and Professionals), Mission Associates, Mission Interns, Short-term Workers, Alpha Mission Team members, formally appointed Team members, Trainees, WOI Board Members and staff, Country office personnel (directors, boards and staff), Ministry staff, volunteers and visitors.

WOI Child Safety Policies and Procedures are consistent with the Child Safety and Protection Network Best Practice Standards/Elements.

A. As an organization, WOI is committed to:

1. Valuing children (defined as it relates to this policy as anyone under the age of 18) and ensuring their safety in all locations and facilities where we are responsible to care for them. This includes but not limited to; WOI functions, children under the care of WOI personnel, children's homes, schools, preschool, children's programs, or in any WOI ministry facility.
2. Striving for excellence in the care and nurture of all children for whom we are responsible
3. Ensuring that all personnel involved with children are given support and training
4. Clearly understanding and regularly communicating procedures for dealing with concerns about possible abuse
5. Complying with legal requirements in reporting as required

B. WOI has a Zero Tolerance policy for sexual abuse of a child

Therefore:

1. WOI will not knowingly allow any person to work within a WOI ministry or accept into membership any applicant who has at any time during their adult life confessed to, been disciplined for, or convicted, pled guilty or no contest to, or found civilly liable for child sexual abuse.
2. No one who confesses to or is proven to have sexually abused a child will be able to remain in or be returned to field service whether the offence was committed during his/her time in WOI or previous to that. Because of our desire to provide children with a safe environment, the high rate of recidivism of those who struggle with sexual abuse of children and our corporate inability to provide a reasonable level of accountability and stability in life for those who struggle with this issue, WOI does not believe it appropriate to allow offenders to continue as part of the mission.

3. All reports of child abuse will be responded to thoroughly following due processes outlined in this policy.

C. WOI ministries child safety policy

Child abuse is serious and its consequences far reaching. Implementing child safety policies and good working practices is required by all WOI ministries.

Therefore, all WOI ministries must have a WOI approved Child Safety Policy regardless of whether they work directly with children or not.

The WOI policy will be the default policy if no other approved policy is in place.

D. Reporting child safety concerns

WOI personnel are required to report any child safety concerns relating to WOI personnel and their families to the Child Safety Coordinator or WOI senior leadership. All child safety concerns received by senior leadership will be passed on to the Child Safety Coordinator.

E. Confidentiality

In the case of a child safety concern, WOI has a policy of confidentiality based upon a "need to know" principle in order to protect any children involved as much as possible. The "need to know" principle is to be applied at every level of the child safety response process.

F. Decision making

WOI leadership will support, and abide by the outcomes of a child safety enquiry and implement the identified administration action after full explanation.

Definitions of abuse

Child abuse is the ill treatment of a child under the age of 18, often in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power that endangers or impairs the health or welfare of a child.

Cultural factors

These definitions have been written keeping in mind the various cultures represented in the WOI mission community worldwide. WOI utilises common basic definitions of abuse which have been built on international standards.

While it is recognized that local and/or national definitions of child abuse may vary, and there are racial, cultural, religious, and ethnic differences in child rearing and relating to children, it is important to remember that all children have basic human rights.

Types of abuse

1. Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity by an adult or another child (as defined above) which includes but is not limited to:

a. Verbal:

Remarks which include sexual threats, solicitation, sexually explicit language (whether in person, on the telephone, or via text messaging or the internet), or any expression with the intent to arouse or stimulate.

b. Visual:

Indecent exposure, showing or taking of suggestive pictures, pornographic material (real life, drawings or animated), or the showing of unclothed persons, any sexual activity or simulated sexual activity such as masturbation or intercourse, peeping, leering, or staring.

c. Physical Touching:

Physical contact (or penetration by penis, fingers, or any other body part or object) with a person's clothed or unclothed genitals, pubic area, buttocks, or in the case of a female, breast, or causing a child to perform any of these acts. Masturbation in front of or to the victim, rubbing, holding, or kissing for the purpose of sexual gratification.

It includes the use of a child for an older person's gratification – taking advantage of the child's trust. Child sexual abuse is criminal behaviour that involves children in sexual behaviours for which they are not personally, socially or developmentally ready. It may be violent or non-violent and includes all behaviours that involve touching and non-touching aspects.

2. Physical abuse

Physical abuse is any act that results in a non-accidental physical injury. Such acts may include, but are not limited to: slapping, punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, burning, holding under water, pulling hair, or holding against one's will.

3. Emotional abuse

Recognised areas of emotional abuse are exploitation or corruption of children, threats, witnessing others being abused (e.g. domestic violence), isolation and prevention of participation in normal activities, communicating to a child that he or she is worthless or unloved.

Emotional abuse is defined by a pattern of behaviour over time that impairs or risks impairing a child's functioning or development. It includes acts of commission and acts of omissions.

Acts of commission may include but are not limited to:

unreasonable restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, denigrating, screaming, threatening, scaring, humiliating, scape-goating, ridiculing, blaming, sarcasm, discriminating, bullying, hazing, unpredictable responses, constant family discord and double message communication, or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment, intentional withholding of basic human needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical, education or emotional and physical security and protection.

Acts of omission: Emotional abuse includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate and supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies commensurate with her or his personal potential in the context of the society in which the child dwells.

4. Neglect

Neglect is the failure to provide for the development of the child in all spheres: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers, and causes or has a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical mental spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise, and protect children from harm as much as feasible.

Neglect also includes depriving a child of their basic needs of food, clothing, warmth and shelter, emotional and physical security and protection, medical and dental care, cleanliness, education and supervision.

5. Spiritual abuse

Spiritual abuse may include but is not limited to patterns of abusive behaviour that involve misuse of scripture and scriptural principles to create fear and control or manipulate a child, to protect the offender, or to manage the child for the convenience of the adults. Aspects of spiritual abuse are evident in most cases of physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

Child-to-Child Cases:

Should both the victim and the alleged offender be under the age of 18, it will typically be considered abuse if there are more than two years' difference (730 days or more) between the children or there is a difference in responsibility, trust, or power between them.

If there is less than two years' age difference and there is not a significant difference in responsibility, trust, or power between them, what would normally be defined as abuse will be considered inappropriate sexual behaviour, with an action plan put in place to address the behaviours of concern and their effects.

The following actions may involve abuse or inappropriate behaviour of one child to another and are prohibited: Bullying, hazing, derogatory name-calling, ridicule or humiliation, singling out a child for negative treatment or exclusions, child-to-child inappropriate sexual touch, inappropriate sexually explicit language, showing of sexually explicit images, hitting, slapping, pushing, holding against the will, or otherwise assaulting another child.

Because of these and other variables, child-to-child cases will be judged on a case-by-case basis. Child-to-child abuse includes all types of abuse defined above.

Inappropriate behaviour

If the internal investigation identifies behaviours that do not meet the WOI definition of abuse, but do constitute behaviours that are harmful to children, an outcome of inappropriate behaviour¹ will be reached, with a suitable action plan put in place to provide accountability, mentoring, and counselling to overcome both the behaviour and its causes.

¹ *There is a distinction between one-time inappropriate behaviour, which needs to be addressed to prevent recurrence, and repeated action, which meets the definition of abuse.*

Code of Conduct

Background

The welfare and safety of children are paramount in WOI's policies and procedures. This includes valuing them, regarding them positively, and treating them with respect and care at all times.

Adult personnel assume the full burden of setting and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all interaction with children.

The most effective way to prevent abuse of children is to be vigilant. By being vigilant in adhering to the following standards for interaction with children we hope to protect children from abuse.

This Code of Conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following expectations of personnel.

1. Visibility

All work with children shall be planned in a way that minimizes risks as far as possible. This includes being visible to other adults when working with children.

This can be accomplished by planning activities in areas where other adults are present and at a time when other activities are occurring. It can also be accomplished by installing windows in all classrooms and other rooms occupied by children or by keeping doors open.

2. Overcoming Isolation

At least two unrelated adults shall be present in work with children.

Isolation can also be overcome by avoiding being alone with children. For example, take two or more children to the bathroom together, rather than only one; drop off siblings last in a carpool or take your own child along when providing rides. An adequate number of adults shall supervise youth events, especially overnight activities.

If unavoidable to go out alone with a child, the adult caregiver should report, and preferably record, the purpose and duration of the trip to another adult.

3. Accountability

All personnel are expected to interact with children in a mature, capable, safe, caring, and responsible manner, with a high level of accountability. All adult personnel are responsible for giving and accepting feedback from others in order to maintain a high level of professionalism and integrity in interactions with children.

When ministry to a child involves one-on-one contact, the following standards should be followed.

- Always be accountable to other adults regarding your interactions with children
- Parents and/or supervisors are to be notified beforehand of any activities with children, for example, before transporting a child, keeping a child after school, a youth activity, or when tutoring a child
- Counselling or other necessarily confidential meetings with children shall be done
 - in an office with a window or with the door open
 - or in a private but open area
 - only when another adult is in close vicinity who is aware that the meeting is occurring, and willing to stay in the vicinity until it is completed.
- In an emergency situation, find someone to go with you if at all possible, or notify whoever is available

4. Recording Observations and Concerns

It is important that WOI childcare workers record unusual events and observations that are ambiguous, open to misinterpretation and/or may indicate abuse has taken place. Childcare workers need to take personal responsibility in this area, keeping a confidential personal record. There may be occasions when it is appropriate to have your leader read and sign your observations.

5. Supervision

Supervision also reduces risk. Program administrators shall periodically and randomly inspect classrooms, offices, work areas and other areas where children and adults are together.

6. Technology

Technology shall be used appropriately to protect children from abuse and exploitation, for example, to prevent inappropriate internet content and use.

7. Discipline

Discipline shall be used to teach and correct rather than punish. It shall not include slapping, hitting, shaming, yelling at, or belittling a child or other forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

8. Differential Treatment

Adults shall avoid favouring or showing differential treatment to particular children to the exclusion of and in the presence of others, or excluding children in the presence of others.

9. Touch

Because healthy, caring touch is valuable to children but unhealthy touch is abusive, the following guidelines apply:

- Touch shall be in response to the need of the child and not the need of the adult.
- Touch shall be open rather than secretive. For example, a hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch shall be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the adult. It shall be with the child's permission and any resistance from the child shall be respected.
- Touch shall always communicate respect for the child. Adults shall avoid doing things of a personal nature for children that they are able to do for themselves, including dressing, bathing, etc.
- Adults and other youth or children shall not hit, slap, pinch, push, hold against their will, or otherwise assault children.
- If something unusual happens, report this to an appropriate WOI leader as soon as possible and record the incident, e.g. a child touching you inappropriately or speaking provocatively or accusing you of inappropriate touch.

The following signs of affection are generally appropriate within specific contexts: verbal praise, side hugs, or shoulder to shoulder hugs. For smaller children, touching their hands, faces, shoulders and arms, arms around their shoulders (when culturally appropriate), hugs, or holding them when others are present.

The following behaviours between personnel and children are inappropriate or may be perceived as inappropriate and shall not be engaged in: touching buttocks, chests, genital areas, or thighs; showing affection in isolated areas or when alone with a child; lying on a bed with a child; flirtatious or seductive looks; any form of affection that is unwanted by the child; sexually suggestive or explicit language, showing sexually-suggestive pictures or videos or playing sexually-suggestive games with any child; any behaviour that could be interpreted as sexual in nature.

Team members shall monitor each other in the area of physical contact, helping each other by pointing out anything that could be misinterpreted.

10. Verbal Interaction

Words shall be used to support and encourage a child, such as praise, positive reinforcement, and appropriate jokes. Inappropriate verbal interaction includes the following: shaming, belittling, humiliating, name calling, using harsh language that may frighten, threaten to humiliate the child, cursing, or making derogatory remarks about the child, their family, and/or their place of origin.

Inappropriate verbal interaction also includes inappropriate comments that relate to physique or body development, telling derogatory or sexual jokes, making sexually suggestive comments, telling inappropriate secrets, or inappropriately discussing sexual encounters or desires with children.