

# Child Protection Policy of AHEAD

The Association of Human Rights Educators commits to raise awareness, educate, protect and defend children rights in all its actions and activities.

Our Child Protection Policy is the tool to ensure that all our members, volunteers and associates are aware and meet our standards and responsibilities as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.

<b>Child Protection Policy of AHEAD</b>	<b>1</b>
The Association of Human Rights Educators	1
Safety in our activities	2
Protection Policies in place	2
Protection against child abuse	3
Child-safe projects and programmes	4
Reducing the risk by staff, volunteers and associates	4
Certificate of absence of sexual offences	5
Running safe events and activities for children	5
Ensuring good practice when using media	5
Reporting abuse of children in their community	6
AHEAD's Commitments	6
Awareness:	6
Objectives:	7
Field of Application	7
Code of Conduct	7
Procedures	9

# The Association of Human Rights Educators

AHEAD is the Association of Human Rights Educators in Barcelona. AHEAD's projects directly address educators, both from the formal and non formal education sectors, community and cultural mediators, children, young people and adult learners. The Association's initiatives combine the local and the global dimension of our priority areas. Find more about us and our projects at <https://aheadedu.org/en/>

Based in Barcelona, AHEAD supports since 2009 initiatives and educational programmes based on the Children Rights' principles, bridging organisations working with children and the formal education sector. AHEAD edits Children Rights educational materials and works in close cooperation with the local and regional administration and the Education and pedagogical faculties of Universities around Europe. We are looking forward to integrating in a consortium and contributing with our expertise.

## Safety in our activities

The safety of our participants, especially children and young people, is our number one priority.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility, but specially of our organisation developing educational projects for this target group. We operate within a culture of openness and recognise and keep aware that abuse can happen in any organisation, it is for that reason that we are especially attentive to the aspects referred to in this document.

## Protection Policies in place

This policy complies with the following protection policies:

- Ley Orgánica 1/1996, de Protección Jurídica del Menor (LO 1/1996) (see Articles 12 and 13 in particular).
- Ley 26/2015, de 28 de Julio, de modificación del sistema de protección a la infancia y a la adolescencia.
- Protocol d'Actuació entre els Departaments de Treball, Afers Socials i Famílies i d'ensenyament, de prevenció, detecció, notificació, derivació i coordinació de les situacions de maltractament infantil i adolescent en l'àmbit educatiu (Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament d'Ensenyament)

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In child protection matters in our organisation activities, Ahead will follow the inter-agency and child protection procedures laid down by the Generalitat de Catalunya.

In the event that a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm a referral to the Police and/or Social Services should be made immediately. If in doubt about which agency to contact, advice should be sought from Emergencias on 112.

## Protection against child abuse

Children, minors under 18 years old as recognised in our legislation, can be abused in many ways depending on the context and culture. They may be abused in a family, an institution, community or faith setting, or via social media/internet. They may be harmed by an adult or adults or another child or children. There are also practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), forced or early marriage that cause significant harm to children. In AHEAD we are especially attentive to the following abuses:

**Physical abuse:** actual or potential physical harm perpetrated by another person, adult or child. It may involve hitting, shaking, poisoning, drowning and burning. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

**Sexual abuse:** forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice in consenting to. This may include, but is not limited to, rape, oral sex, penetration, or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching. It may also include involving children in looking at, or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities and encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

**Child sexual exploitation:** a form of sexual abuse that involves children being engaged in any sexual activity in exchange for money, gifts, food, accommodation, affection, status, or anything else that they or their family needs. It usually involves a child being manipulated or coerced, which may involve befriending children, gaining their trust, and subjecting them to drugs and alcohol. The abusive relationship between victim and perpetrator involves an imbalance of power where the victim's options are limited. It is a form of abuse that can be misunderstood by children and adults as consensual.

Child sexual exploitation manifests in different ways. It can involve an older perpetrator exercising financial, emotional or physical control over a young person. It can involve peers manipulating or forcing victims into sexual activity, sometimes within gangs and in gang-affected neighbourhoods. It may also involve opportunistic or organised networks of perpetrators who profit financially from trafficking young victims between different locations to engage in sexual activity with multiple men.

**Neglect and negligent treatment:** allowing for context, resources and circumstances, neglect and negligent treatment refers to a persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of a child's healthy physical, spiritual, moral and mental development. It includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm and provide for nutrition, shelter and safe living/working conditions. It may also involve maternal neglect during pregnancy as a result of drug or alcohol misuse and the neglect and ill treatment of a disabled child.

**Emotional abuse:** persistent emotional maltreatment that impacts on a child's emotional development. Emotionally abusive acts include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, bullying (including cyber bullying), and threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

Commercial exploitation: exploiting a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labour.

## **Child-safe projects and programmes**

All projects and programmes of AHEAD are designed to minimise the risk of harm to the children they come into contact with or impact upon directly or indirectly by taking sufficient account of child safety, whatever the focus of the work.

A child safe project ensures that it takes account of the environment, context and impact (intended or unintended) on the children and communities it is engaged with. Our projects determine the context in which they are working and adopt an approach that includes risk assessing all proposed programmes, adapting programmes so they become safer for children and including additional safety strategies during the implementation phase.

## **Reducing the risk by staff, volunteers and associates**

Whilst it is difficult to contemplate, there are staff, volunteers and associates who do harm children, whether deliberately or through a lack of understanding of what constitutes abusive behaviour.

To reduce this risk, AHEAD makes it clear through the organisation's codes of conduct, recruitment procedures, training and internal communications that child abuse by staff, volunteers and associates will not be tolerated.

It also be made clear that this obligation on staff, volunteers and associates to keep children safe extends to their conduct towards children with whom they have contact, outside the work environment as well as inside.

## **Certificate of absence of sexual offences**

The certificate of absence of sexual offences is proof of lack of these types of crimes. Since 2015, people working in regular contact with children are required to provide a certificate stating that they have not committed any crimes of this nature.

AHEAD requires for the activities with children all its staff and volunteers to provide an updated official Certificate.

## **Running safe events and activities for children**

Most activities and events aim to provide children with fun and/or educational experience. However when planning activities, various considerations need to be taken into account in order to avoid risks. These include the following:

- Recognising that the family or community do not always welcome the participation of children in such activities.
- The organisation is organising events or activities at times when children are supposed to be helping with household jobs or income-generating work.
- Ensuring that particular care is taken to ensure preventative measures are put in place to safeguard children if activities or events are to take place in unfamiliar places and outside family care.

## **Ensuring good practice when using media**

Most organisations use images of and stories about children, families and their communities to promote their work and engage donors and supporters.

It is essential to minimise the risk of inappropriate use of information, stories and visual images (photographs, video or social media) of children.

Our practice include:

- Images of children must not show them in states of undress or in inappropriate poses.
- Details attached to images and included in stories must not allow that child to be traced

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to his or her home or community.

- Distinctive buildings, street signs or landmarks should not be included in an image if they identify where a child lives or works.
- Geotagging of images should be disabled when taking photographs.
- Ensure the photographer/journalist/translator you have employed has been properly vetted and reference checked.
- Make sure you have been given permission by children and their parents/carers to take their image and use their information.

## **Reporting abuse of children in their community**

Abuse arising within the community may not be due to our organisation's programmes or operations. However, our organisation still has a responsibility to report on suspected or actual child abuse taking place.

This should be reported to the formal authorities or/and to organisations that are able to deal with cases appropriately. The reporting process will need to be decided at a local level and advice and guidance must be sought to ensure that children and their families are not put at further risk or made vulnerable by the very action of reporting harm and/or abuse.

## **AHEAD's Commitments**

### **Awareness:**

AHEAD ensures that the staff involved in all the projects and the staff of partner organizations are made aware of the problems, criticalities and risks associated with the abuse, mistreatment and sexual exploitation of children. The latter, together with their families, will be informed, at the time of implementation, about the rules of conduct that staff and representatives will implement during the project activities.

### **Prevention**

We are committed to ensuring that personnel involved in project activities minimize and eliminate risks in order to prevent harm to minors. We need to create an environment that will help to colour the unique legal-behavioural primacy of minors.

### **Reporting**

We are committed to ensuring that project staff are clear when to report a suspicion of possible

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abuse and what action to take.

#### Response

We are committed to ensuring effective intervention in response to any allegations of abuse by supporting, protecting and securing the child involved.

## Objectives:

- prevent situations of abuse and maltreatment of children and adolescents within the activities carried out;
- make children aware of their rights and develop an active role in protecting them and their peers;
- inform children and adolescents, as well as the human resources employed in the activity, about the policy of child protection and the related procedures;
- encourage all those working with children to act in the interests of their development and protection;
- ensure that all employees work under appropriate conditions to contribute to the well-being and protection of children and adolescents;
- maintain and activate safe and transparent listening channels that guarantee all stakeholders the right to be heard.

## Field of Application

The substance of this Policy binds all the human resources involved in AHEAD's project activities; the staff and representatives of the partner entities and any other legal entity, organization, collective body, general or public, that has formal/negotiation relations with the project partners, harbingers of direct contacts with children and teenagers (minors)

## Code of Conduct

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The staff, volunteers, staff of partner organisations and their representatives are strictly forbidden:

- Hitting, physically assaulting or physically or psychologically abusing a minor;
- to have attitudes towards minors that - also from a psychological point of view - can negatively influence their harmonious and socio-relational development;
- adopt behaviours that represent negative educational and training examples for minors, including consumption of drugs, tobacco or alcohol;
- engage in sexual activities or have sexual relations with persons under the age of 18; no exemption may be invoked in this regard, even in relation to a hypothetical legitimate expectation generated by the malevolent behaviour of the minor. The principle "malitia supplet aetatem" does not apply;
- entertain relations with minors who may, directly or through mediation, constitute evidence or elements of exploitation, mistreatment or abuse;
- use inappropriate, offensive or abusive language, make suggestions or give advice;
- behave in an inappropriate or sexually provocative manner;
- establish or maintain systematic contact with minors, including with the help of personal online communication tools (e-mail, chat, social networks, etc.);
- tolerating or participating in illegal or abusive behaviour or behaviour that compromises their safety;
- act in such a way as to shame, humiliate, belittle or despise a child, or perpetrate any other form of emotional abuse;
- discriminate, treat differently or encourage some children to the exclusion of others.
- Violate the child's privacy: members are prohibited from disclosing or divulging information, news, personal and/or sensitive data concerning children involved in the project activities. In particular cases where the child's interests (health, school, psychosocial services, justice, etc.) prevail, the quantity, quality and method of transmission of this information must be explicitly authorized by the parent or guardian.

Any behaviour that is disrespectful or outrageous to the child's privacy, intimacy and personal space must be discouraged.

This list is not exhaustive or exclusive.

# Procedures

The legal representatives of the project partners have the following obligations and responsibilities:

- Verify any criticality in the conduct of the human resources involved in the project activities before and during the execution of the project.
- Ensure that all staff members are aware of this document and have signed a declaration that it is unequivocally clear that they fully accept the rules set out in the Policy.
- Establish and maintain a centralized reporting system, ensuring management control of cases of alleged violations of the Policy.
- AHEAD requires for the activities with children all its staff and volunteers to provide an updated official Certificate of absence of sexual offences (official proof of lack of record on these types of crimes)

Measures and sanctions:

All persons who behave in a manner expressly prohibited by this Regulation or who behave in a serious and repeated disheartening manner will see the partnership terminated.

Reporting:

A person responsible for the system for reporting alleged violations of the rules and the spirit of this document will be appointed. This reporting system officer will also appoint other local reporting system officers in locations or operational contexts away from his or her place of work, always with a mandate corresponding to his or her own.

- All persons involved in project activities are required to report any suspicions of child abuse, whether specific reports or unconfirmed suspicions, to the person in charge of the reporting system or to the local reporting system managers. The priority of all those to whom an abuse is reported is always the protection of the child in general:
- All reports should be made immediately and in any case within 24 hours, unless it is impossible or impractical to make them in exceptional circumstances.
- Local managers are obliged to inform the person in charge of the reporting system as soon as possible.

Monitoring

The board of Ahead and directly the team of childrens' addressed programmes supervise the effective application of this document in all its parts and its spirit on all occasions directly involving minors.

The board of Ahead and directly the team of childrens' addressed programmes will verify that this document is timely delivered, explained, read and agreed by all those involved in these project activities.

15th September 2019  
Board of AHEAD