

# Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy: Service Team Members

Revised: May 2018



## Introduction

Child abuse is more than just a global problem – it's a tragedy. Abuse occurs in all countries and in all societies and includes physical violence, sexual molestation and exploitation, emotional cruelty, and neglect of children's basic needs. It is nearly always preventable. At Kids Alive International, the child's best interests are our primary concern and consideration. We believe:

- Children have the right to a happy, healthy, and secure childhood
- The abuse of children is an abuse of their rights
- Child abuse is *never* acceptable

Abuse of minors, which includes child molestation, is a serious moral fault and is subject to criminal charges in most societies. Child abuse takes advantage of the vulnerability of children. It violates Biblical standards of holiness and the mandate to genuinely love and seek the good of others and causes deep spiritual and psychological wounds.

Kids Alive International will ensure that anyone who represents Kids Alive, including Service Team members:

- Are aware of the problem of child abuse and of situations where children may be at risk
- Actively safeguard children from abuse through good practice
- Report all concerns about possible abuse
- Respond appropriately and quickly when abuse is suspected or discovered

Every service team member must read and sign the Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Policy (see the declaration below) before they engage with any Kids Alive program operations.

## Types of Abuse

### Physical abuse and neglect

Physical abuse includes inflicting physical injury upon a child. This may include burning, hitting, punching, shaking, kicking, beating, or otherwise harming a child. It may be the result of over-discipline or physical punishment which is not appropriate to the child's age. Physical neglect may include failing to provide any of the following: adequate food, appropriate clothing, medical care, supervision, or proper protection from harm.

### Emotional abuse (*also known as verbal or mental abuse or psychological maltreatment*)

Emotional abuse can include caregivers threatening or terrorizing a child, using extreme and/or bizarre forms of punishment, such as confinement in a closet or a dark room, or tying a child to a chair. Other forms of emotional abuse may include ignoring, belittling, rejecting, using derogatory terms, excessive blaming, or excessive isolating. Emotional neglect may include a lack of love, emotional support or attention, or excessive inconsistency.

### Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse ranges from inappropriate contact to rape, as well as non-contact abuse such as forcing children to observe sexual acts and pornography. **Child grooming** is befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child (and sometimes the family) to lower a child's inhibitions for child sexual abuse; this is also a criminal offense in

many countries. It should be noted that sexual abuse may occur between people of the opposite sex and between people of the same sex.

### **Spiritual abuse**

All children who enter a Kids Alive program are expected to participate in all spiritual activities provided for them. This expectation is made clear to the children and their families. While children's participation is essential, Kids Alive will seek to safeguard children from any form of spiritual abuse. Spiritual abuse, as with all forms of abuse, is about the misuse of authority to promote the interests of the abuser rather than the best interests of the child. Spiritual abuse can take the form of:

- Authoritarianism which demands unconditional submission to spiritual leadership
- Refusal by an adult to respect a child's opinions or views on spiritual issues
- Valuing an individual for their performance rather than their worth to God
- Unbalanced and excessive focus on particular points of theology
- Manipulation through fear and condemnation

### **Action Taken to Prevent Abuse**

Each ministry is regularly training their staff, conducting audits and has considered site-specific guidelines for how to prevent abuse. **It is important that team members protect themselves from allegations of abuse by following all guidelines given and demonstrating good practice at all times.** This means that they will avoid putting themselves into a position where they could be accused of abuse or of attempting to abuse a child.

Kids Alive recognizes that appropriate physical touch by adults is important in a child's development. It is extremely important, however, that team members avoid any appearance of inappropriate behavior. Team members may not hold, kiss, cuddle or touch children in an inappropriate or culturally-insensitive way and should use good judgment, wisdom and caution in becoming personally involved with children who have emotional and/or psychological problems. Children should be aware that, at any time, they can say "no" to any activity or interaction that makes them feel uncomfortable.

### **Inappropriate physical contact includes:**

- Demanding hugs and kisses
- Touching chest, genital area, upper legs, buttocks, waist, and stomach area
- Sitting the child in the center of the team member's lap
- Seductiveness or suggestive contact
- Physical contact of any kind which is done for the pleasure or satisfaction of the team member
- Rough physical games or interactions with children that may be misinterpreted
- Any form of physical punishment
- Any touching used to express power or control over a child, except holds/restraints that are used to prevent a child from hurting himself/herself or others

### **Procedure for Dealing with Suspected or Alleged Child Abuse**

**The focus is always safeguarding and protecting the child.** All who serve at a Kids Alive International ministry must treat any suspected abuse seriously. No one should ever ignore it in the hope that it will go away.

**All suspected abuse must be reported immediately to the Ministry Director or Country Director.** Any adult who withholds information or covers up any kind of abuse **may be considered an accomplice**, and action may be taken against him/her.

## Service Team Members

- All team members will be made aware of Kids Alive International's policies as part of their orientation and will sign an agreement that they will abide by the contents of this Policy and any other local expectations. Criminal background checks will be carried out on all service team participants.
- All interaction between team members and children will be accompanied by a Kids Alive employee or missionary at all times. The employee or missionary will be responsible for ensuring that the children are protected from any inappropriate activity.
- Should accommodation be provided to team members, it will be ensured that no unauthorized contact between the team and children is possible.
- Any inappropriate behavior on the part of a team member will be dealt with immediately. Any concerns will be reported to the Country Director, who will inform the Regional Director or Vice President of International Programs **within 12 hours**. Appropriate action will be determined and implemented by the Country Director in consultation with the Vice President of International Programs. This may include criminal investigation and/or potential severance of the relationship with Kids Alive International.

## Child Privacy

- Kids Alive International respects each child's right to privacy. Care will be taken at all times to ensure that no confidential details about a child's life, medical concerns, or confidential personal history are released to the public. Examples of information that we do not share include details of abuse that children have received or done to others; personal struggles or family information that might embarrass children (e.g., alcohol or drug usage, psychological problems); communicable diseases, physical handicaps, or mental health needs; and addresses or other information that could identify members of their family.
- When the story of a child is shared for the purpose of informing and educating churches or other institutions, the child's name in the story should be changed along with any other information that might identify him/her.
- Team members who post pictures or stories on personal websites, blogs, or social networking sites are required to ensure that child confidentiality and the terms of this Policy are maintained.
- Under no circumstances should team members connect directly with Kids Alive children on Facebook or other social networking sites, by email, or by mobile phone. It will be made clear to children that they are not to initiate such contact as well as how they should respond if contact is made with them by a team member. This response will include reporting the contact to a designated staff member. Team members will be made aware of this regulation in relevant literature and orientation. All correspondence to and from children and their sponsors should be sent via the Kids Alive International office. No correspondence is allowed outside of our Child Sponsorship program.

**Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy:**  
**Service Team Members**  
**Code of Safe Conduct and Declaration**



**As a service team member at a Kids Alive International ministry, I affirm that:**

- I will conduct myself in a manner consistent with my position as a positive role model to children as a representative of Kids Alive International
- I will follow the Policy, local laws, and good practice guidelines, and will implement adequate safeguards to avoid putting myself in a position where I might be accused of abuse
- I will avoid any unnecessary or potentially abusive physical contact with children
- I will use language and topics that are appropriate to the situation and avoid suggestive comments to a child, even as a joke. I will avoid any actions or words intended to humiliate or belittle children
- I will avoid rough physical games or interactions with children that may be misinterpreted
- Photographs of children or vulnerable adults will be taken and shared in accordance with the Policy and any other guidelines I receive
- I will be respectful of children’s rights, background, culture and beliefs, as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- I will undertake, to the best of my ability, to protect children in Kids Alive International’s care from any form of abuse
- I will report any concerns that I have regarding child protection issues as soon as possible
- I recognize that, should the terms of Kids Alive International’s Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy be breached, immediate and appropriate action will be taken by Kids Alive according to the provisions set out within the Policy

**I confirm that I have read and understood Kids Alive International’s Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy for Service Team Members and agree to abide by this at all times with all children and vulnerable adults that I come into contact with, to protect both myself and them.**

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\* Please return this form to your team leader, who will return all forms to Kids Alive International. Thanks! \*\*\*