

# ASTHMA AND ALLERGY FOUNDATION OF WEST AFRICA (AAFWA)

Asthma and Allergy  
Foundation of West Africa



## **SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

### **Table of Contents**

**Child Protection Policy**

**Code of Conduct for Working with Children**

**Publicity, Media & Communications Regarding Children**

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of West Africa (AAFWA) is an established and trusted nonprofit organization that works to improve the health and well-being of people, especially children, whose lives are affected by asthma, allergy and other long-term breathing difficulties. AAFWA helps ensure that children's rights are fully realized and that children living with asthma receive proper treatment and that our dealings with children is in concordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of West Africa is committed to safeguarding children from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation. AAFWA strives to create an environment where children associated with our programmes are free from abuse, neglect and exploitation and are empowered to raise their voice against it.

### **Definitions**

#### **CHILD**

For the purposes of this document, a "child" is defined as anyone under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

#### **CHILD ABUSE**

According to the World Health Organization, "child abuse" or "maltreatment" constitutes "all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power."

#### **CHILD PROTECTION**

A broad term to describe behaviors, philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In the current context, it applies particularly to the duty of organizations – and individuals associated with those organizations – to protect children in their care.

#### **CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**

The use of physical force causing pain, but not wounds, as a means of discipline (includes spanking, rapping on the head and slapping).

## **DIRECT CONTACT WITH CHILDREN**

Being in the physical presence of a child or children in the context of the organization's work, whether contact is occasional or regular, short or long-term.

## **INDIRECT CONTACT WITH CHILDREN**

Having access to information on children in the context of the organization's work, such as children's names, locations (addresses of individuals or projects), photographs and case studies. Providing funding for organizations that work "directly" with children, albeit indirectly, this nonetheless has an impact on children, and therefore confers upon the organization responsibility for child protection issues. [Please note: this list of examples is not exhaustive.]

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

A framework of principles, standards and guidelines to create a safe and positive environment for children that protects them from intentional and unintentional harm.

## **INFORMED CONSENT**

Capacity to freely give consent based on all available information, according to the age and evolving capacities of the child. For example, if you seek consent from a child regarding taking their photograph and using it for publicity purposes, the child is informed as to how the photograph will be used and is given the opportunity to refuse. If a child is invited to provide input into the development of a child protection policy, they must be made aware of the time it will take, what exactly will be involved, their roles and responsibilities, and only then will they be able to give their "informed consent".

## **Four Key Areas of Intervention**

**1. Awareness:** AAFWA will ensure that all our staff and volunteers coming in direct contact with children are aware of the definition and signs of child abuse, the risks, and proper reporting procedures.

### **a. Staff and Volunteer Training**

- i. Awareness of Abuse
- ii. Identification of Abuse (early indicators of neglect and maltreatment)
- iii. Talking to Children about Abuse

iv. Orientation of Child Protection Policy

v. Signed Code of Conduct for AAFWA staff and volunteers working with children

vi. Responding to Abuse Claims

**b. Child Training**

i. Awareness of Abuse

ii. Orientation of Child Protection Policy

iii. Helping Children Be Strong (good touch/bad touch; just say no; stranger danger)

iv. Reporting Abuse

2. **Prevention:** We will ensure through awareness, good practice, and proper infrastructure, that AAFWA staff and volunteers and others minimize the risk to children.

**a. Limiting Access**

i. Barring of male and non-childcare staff and volunteers from being alone with a child or in an area where others cannot see them.

b. Signed Code of Conduct by anyone coming in contact with children.

c. Copies of the Code of Conduct and AAFWA Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy are readily available to all staff and volunteers.

3. **Reporting:** We will ensure that staff and volunteers and children are clear what steps to take where concerns arise regarding safety of children.

**b. Staff Reporting Protocol**

i. Immediately after being aware of abuse, write down everything the child has told you or you have seen, facts only.

ii. Report any incidences of abuse/abuse claims to the Executive Committee, or a Social Worker.

iii. Contact the local Child Welfare Committee and/or local police to register a case, take due cognizance of such occurrences and conduct necessary investigations.

iv. Report any infractions of the code of conduct with the In Charge and/or Social Worker.

4. Responding: We will ensure action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

a. Establish local linkages with police department, child welfare committees, or other qualified organizations.

b. Consult with Social Worker and the Executive Committee whenever abuse claims are made for proper guidance.

c. Take necessary actions to prevent abuse from happening in the future (i.e., termination of abuser).

d. Support children, staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of any concerns.

e. Ensure children receive proper counseling and resources necessary after abuse occurs.

Where concerns of child abuse arise, AAFWA will consider its legal obligations to report those concerns to relevant, competent authorities. It is not our job to prove/disprove but to report the abuse claim.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN**

There is an imbalance of power in any interaction between adults and children, tilting in favor of adults. As a result, children are susceptible to various forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation. The AAFWA Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy consists of guidelines and a framework that will guide the behavior of staff and associates who work with children to always provide a safe and positive environment, free from abuse.

Staff and volunteers will:

- Ensure all visitors, volunteers and vendors have signed in and out of any educational, health or other facility operated by AAFWA.
- Have a female staff member accompany children on travels.
- As much as possible, work with children in a place in view of others.
- Seek permission of children and staff prior to taking any photos.
- Take seriously any concerns raised by children.
- Act on children's concerns and problems immediately.

- Report any child abuse and protection concerns they have to the In Charge and Social Worker.
- Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns or allegations.
- Empower children by discussing their rights, acceptable and unacceptable behavior with adults, and methods to report abuse or concerns confidentially.

**Staff and volunteers will not:**

- Use discipline and teaching techniques that harm the dignity of the child.
- Use corporal punishment (slapping, hitting, or other physical means that inflict pain).
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice, which is inappropriate, offensive, or abusive.
- Use slang words or abusive language in front of the child.
- Bind or tie a child to restrict movement.
- Withhold food or other basic needs from a child
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate or belittle the child.
- Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favor particular children to the exclusion of others.
- Behave in a manner which is physically inappropriate or sexually provocative.
- Kiss, hug, fondle, rub or touch a child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.
- Sleep alone in a room with a child.
- Allow any non-care giving staff to be alone with a child in an area where others cannot be seen.
- Take photographs of the children while they are bathing, sleeping, changing, or not wearing proper clothing.

## **PUBLICITY, MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS REGARDING CHILDREN**

**Purpose:** To outline the guidelines for depiction of children on social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.), donor communications, and general media (reporting, broadcasting, publication of news, programs, documentaries, etc.).

**Guiding Principle:** Asthma and Allergy Foundation of West Africa's guiding principle is to ensure that the privacy, dignity, and physical/emotional development of children will be protected at all times. AAFWA takes into consideration long-term consequences, always envisioning how the children themselves might perceive the exposure, both now and in the future.

### **Publicity, Media & Communications Guidelines:**

- (i) Share stories that reflect on the children positively, keeping in mind they may see the communications in the future.
- (ii) Obtain permission from the staff, volunteers and children for all photos.
- (iii) When posting on social media sites using your smart phone, disable the location services by going into the settings and privacy options on your phone.
- (iv) Share photographs and videos taken of the children with AAFWA via email, CD, USB drive. Please tag us on all pictures you share on social media sites, so we can give these back to the children and share them with other supporters.

**I have read the above policy and it has been explained to me in detail, and I hereby agree to abide by the rules and regulations stated above. I also understand that my failure to follow these guidelines can result in disciplinary action or immediate termination.**

Signature of Employee/Volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Employee/Volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Director

\_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Director

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_