

<h2>AVI Child Protection Policy</h2>	Effective date	February 2021
	Next review date	February 2023
	Sponsor	Executive Manager – International Programs
	Board committee	Governance
Level / Class Corporate Organisation	Approval / authorisation	Board

1. PURPOSE

AVI has a strong commitment to the safety, wellbeing and protection of children¹. All children have the right to be safe from physical, sexual and emotional abuse and exploitation.

AVI’s commitment to child rights is reflected in its procedures and expected behaviours for all AVI staff, volunteers, program participants, contractors and associates. These measures reflect AVI’s zero tolerance approach to child exploitation or abuse, empower people to be alert to risks, and to seek guidance and support to respond appropriately.

AVI encourages a culture of open discussion regarding the protection and rights of children. The Child Protection Policy will guide AVI’s discussions and decision making on child protection and safeguarding.

AVI commits to doing everything in its power to prevent child abuse and exploitation.

2. SCOPE / PERSONS AFFECTED

Appropriate consultation (tick for ‘yes’, otherwise leave blank)

All personnel, program participants and associates must comply with this policy in the course of their work and when representing AVI:

- AVI personnel
- All AVI program participants
- Australian Volunteers program approved adult and child dependents
- Associates and Board committee members
- Contractors and service providers (who are not directly supervised by AVI staff)

AVI personnel (as defined for the purposes of this policy) are: employees, consultants, contractors, office volunteers, interns, the AVI Board, or anyone engaged to undertake work for AVI.

As a condition of partnership, AVI expects compliance with child protection requirements from overseas partner organisations (where program participants are placed) and Australian partner organisations.

¹ Children are defined as all people under the age of 18 years.

This policy is concerned with conduct/interaction or contact with children by AVI board members, staff, program participants and/or representatives of partner organisations/contractors. Incidents that occur as a result of actions undertaken by individuals not defined by this policies scope are beyond the remit of this policy. However, AVI will endeavour to respond to these issues by providing support, advice, and arranging referrals to relevant authorities or support services in line with policy principles.

3. PRINCIPLES

AVI's commitment to child protection is informed by the following principles:

- **Zero Tolerance of Child abuse and exploitation:** AVI will not tolerate child exploitation and abuse in any way by anyone who works for or is associated with AVI. AVI will not knowingly engage anyone who poses a risk to children.
- **Recognising Children's Rights:** The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) underpins AVI approach to decisions about safeguarding and protecting children. AVI will promote children's rights to life, survival and development; participation; non-discrimination and to have their best interests considered in any decision making
- **The Best Interests of the Child are paramount:** Consideration of what is in the best interests of the child is key in any decision related to AVI's work with children. AVI will be guided by national or international laws, however its operations may go beyond these (i.e. AVI will not necessarily be limited in its response to an incident to complying with relevant laws).
- **Safeguarding and Protecting Children is a shared responsibility:** It is everyone's responsibility to maintain vigilance, practice risk management, and to support AVI's commitment to child rights.
- **Taking a Risk Management Approach:** AVI understands that child exploitation and abuse occurs and is committed to identifying and minimising risk in all its programs and activities.

The principles and values in this policy are guided by those contained in Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Child Protection Policy and ACFID's Code of Conduct.

4. DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

AVI's definitions of abuse include:

- **Physical abuse** — the use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviour includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning.
- **Neglect** — the failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing.
- **Emotional abuse** — refers to a parent or caregiver's inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child, or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurture and emotional availability. Such acts have a high probability of damaging a child's self-esteem or social competence.
- **Sexual abuse** — the use of a child for sexual gratification by an adult or significantly older child or adolescent. Sexually abusive behaviours can include fondling genitals; masturbation; oral sex; vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object; fondling breasts; voyeurism; exhibitionism; and exposing the child to, or involving the child in, pornography
- **Ill-treatment** — disciplining or correcting a child in an unreasonable and seriously inappropriate

or improper manner; making excessive and/or degrading demands of a child; hostile use of force towards a child; and/or a pattern of hostile or unreasonable and seriously inappropriate degrading comments or behaviour towards a child.

- **Grooming** — grooming concerns predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. Grooming behaviour is where an adult communicates, by words or conduct, with a child or with a person who has care, supervision or authority for the child with the intention of facilitating the child's involvement in sexual conduct, either with the groomer or another adult.
- **On-line grooming** — sending electronic messages to children, with the intention of procuring children to engage in or submit to sexual activity with another person, including but not necessarily the sender; or of sending an electronic message with indecent content to a recipient who the sender believes is a child.
- **Child Exploitation** — includes forcing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of abuse against a child, possessing, controlling, producing, obtaining or transmitting child exploitation material, forcing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of grooming or online grooming, or using a child for profit, labour, sexual gratification, or other personal or financial advantage. Child exploitation also includes modern slavery and the trafficking or recruitment of children into armed conflict.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES

5.1 CHILD SAFE RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

AVI will take all reasonable steps to ensure all personnel, program participants and associates have passed screening procedures and do not pose a risk to children. Where AVI is directly responsible for recruitment, AVI will consistently apply robust recruitment procedures for all personnel, program participants and associates.

AVI's child safeguarding recruitment procedures include:

- **National Criminal record checks as a condition for employment:**
 - Criminal record checks must be obtained prior to engagement for all AVI personnel, program participants and associates, irrespective of position or length of engagement.
 - there may be exceptional circumstances where a person is required to commence before a criminal record check is completed, such as rapid recruitment or deployment. In these circumstances the following must occur:
 1. AVI Child Safeguarding Specialist to conduct a child safeguarding risk assessment to determine the level of risk.
 2. AVI Child Safeguarding Specialist to advise whether:
 - The person can commence in the role on the condition that other child safeguarding measures/risk mitigation strategies are in place and a criminal record check is obtained within 2 weeks
 - Or the person is unable to commence in the role until a criminal record check is obtained

Actions following disclosure:

- AVI will not employ or engage a person if their criminal record check includes convictions or sentences for: sexual offences against a child or adult; violent offences against a child or adult; any child exploitation or abuse offence; stalking of a child; serious drug offences; family and domestic violence offences
- The nature of other adverse findings will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Child

Protection and Safeguards Advisor, AVI Leadership, People and Culture and/or the appropriate line manager/coordinator.

- AVI will take all fair and reasonable steps as part of any investigation following an adverse finding including whether the nature of the finding is in conflict with or affects the AVI worker's position - or other persons also covered by the scope of this policy from being able to carry out their duties and responsibilities. AVI will abide by relevant Australian laws and legislation and the AVI Enterprise Agreement, in regards to ensuring any investigations following disclosure are undertaken in line with privacy, confidentiality, and anti-discriminatory legislation
- **Working with Children Checks (WWCC):** applies to all worker or contractor roles that involve direct work with children, , including roles that have access to child-sensitive data, or any contact with children by letter, email, phone or social media. The responsibility lies with the worker or contractor to provide evidence of having obtained a WWCC prior to their engagement with AVI and to maintain a valid WWCC throughout the period of their engagement. The worker must notify AVI when their WWCC is renewed, has lapsed or been revoked. AVI has the right to suspend a worker or transfer to other duties, until the worker obtains a valid WWCC.
- **Verbal Referee Checks:** At least two verbal referee checks will be conducted and documented. Referee checks will include questions pertaining to an applicant's suitability to either work with, or be in contact with children
- **Behavioral based interview questions:** questions pertaining to the worker's interactions with children will be utilized in employment interviews to determine attitudes, motivations, and values, in regards to children and AVI's commitment to child rights
- **Sign and comply with this policy and 'Child Protection Code of Conduct:** as a condition of engagement with AVI. A written record of agreement will be retained on file
- **All employment contracts contain provisions for potential disciplinary action:** including termination of employment following breach of the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct. As a condition of partnership, AVI will expect similar conditions from its partners.

5.2 EDUCATION, TRAINING AND COMMUNICATION

AVI personnel, program participants and associates will undertake child protection policy training as part of orientation and ongoing engagement. All program participants will receive on-line child protection training and also attend a pre-deployment briefing from the Child Protection and Safeguards Advisor or delegate. Parents (as program participants) and children [as child dependents]) will also be provided with targeted support and assistance in managing challenges through the volunteer program. Education and training on child protection tailored to different programs will be provided by in-country staff through dedicated sessions during in-country orientation. Training is delivered through a range of mediums including face to face and through online modules.

- Training will contextualize child protection and provide practical country specific information. Country Office Staff and/or relevant managers are the first point of call for child protection issues in country. They, along with the AVI Child Protection Adviser and Coordinator, continue to monitor and respond to child protection issues and identify ongoing training and support needs.
- AVI's Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct will be available on the AVI and applicable Australian Volunteers program website.

- The AVI Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct will be translated into local languages/dialects to ensure accessibility for all personnel, volunteers and associates, and will also be provided to all Australian and overseas partners.
- Children will be included in volunteer on-boarding and in-country support process, including: access to child friendly on-line learning modules, access to child centred incident reporting processes and invitations to attend pre-departure briefings.

5.3 CHILD PROTECTION IN PROGRAM PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

AVI will work in partnership with partner organisations providing support to assist them to develop and fulfill their responsibilities for the safeguarding of children. A range of factors will be carefully considered in order to develop collaborative partnerships which effectively safeguard children. AVI will implement the following:

- Child Safeguarding risk assessments will be included in organisational appraisals prior to beginning a partnership. Where risks are identified, AVI will support partner organisations to develop appropriate risk-mitigation strategies. This will include risk assessments of programs which involve residential care of children, acknowledging AVI's recognition of family based alternative care and permanency models which view residential care as a last resort in line with the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (2010)².
- The AVI Child Protection and Safeguards Adviser will provide ongoing support to program participants in assignments with high contact with children (such as child protection and child welfare related roles).
- AVI will continue to work collaboratively with partner organisations to monitor, support and report regarding all child safeguarding matters.

AVI will assist partner organizations with support from the Child Protection and Safeguards Adviser and Coordinator to:

- Develop and review partner organization child protection policies and procedures
- Coordinate training and resource provision for partner organisation personnel
- Assess and manage child protection risks
- Meet compliance and reporting requirements, including Australian Volunteer program compliance standards.
- Manage child protection concerns and coordinate responses

5.4 USE OF IMAGES AND MESSAGES

AVI bases all image gathering and publishing processes on ethical standards, which includes an assessment of risks to children; child safety and respect for children's rights, privacy, integrity and dignity. This includes obtaining and documenting informed consent from a child's parent/guardian and, if possible, children themselves. Children's best interests and protection will be prioritized over opportunities for promotion and advocacy.

AVI will educate and increase awareness of safeguarding and ethical approaches to working with parents, guardians and children for image gathering and publishing processes during program participant pre-departure learning/briefings, staff inductions and during ongoing child protection training briefings.

² UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, UNICEF, 2010
http://www.unicef.org/ptotection/alternative_care_Guidelines-English.pdf

AVI has a set of expected behaviours when photographing or filming a child or using children's images for work-related purposes (see annex 1 – Child Protection Code of Conduct). These expectations include that:

- Photographic images should be consistent with AVI's approach to safeguarding and protecting children and should avoid damaging stereotypes.
- AVI will respect the rights of children and their parents/guardians (right to privacy, participation, and right to consent).
- Photography briefing notes for program participants will include appropriate information about AVI's safeguarding and protecting children strategy and will reflect best practice standards for external publishing.

5.5 CHILD PROTECTION RISK ASSESSMENTS

As noted in section 5.3, AVI personnel will undertake child safeguarding risk assessments for all programs and activities that may have contact with children. This assessment will identify risks (including the level of contact with children and the nature of contact), classify high risk activities, and document steps being taken to reduce or remove these risks. Child Safeguarding Risk Assessments should be undertaken at program design, proposal stage, and at all reporting intervals.

AVI Leadership is responsible for managing and responding to any child protection incidents and risks. The Child Protection and Safeguards Advisor will provide support to the Leadership Team in responding to incidents. AVI has developed country-specific risk profiles (Child Safeguarding Country Profiles) as a means to further support all AVI personnel undertaking assignments of work-related duties overseas.

5.6 OBLIGATION FOR AVI PARTNERS

MoU's/Agreements with all AVI Partners will include clauses which state a partner's commitment to safeguarding children (including commitment to incident reporting) and compliance with AVI's Child Protection Code of Conduct.

6. INCIDENT/RISK REPORTING AND RESPONSE

AVI personnel, program participants or associates must immediately report any concerns, suspicions, or behaviour that is suspected of being child abuse or exploitation, or a suspected breach AVI's Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct. Children and members of the community may also report.

What to report:

- An observation or disclosure (by an adult or child) of abuse or exploitation
- An observation or disclosure of potential risk of harm or child abuse
- A breach of the AVI Child Protection Policy or 'Child Protection Code of Conduct'
- A situation or environment which is working in opposition to, or poses a threat to children's rights
- An observation or disclosure of behaviour which could be considered grooming
- Child exploitation materials that are received on AVI electronic equipment (this can include, but is not limited to, SPAM, popups, text messages, emails, or social media communications).
A report must be made when:

- Suspected harm is due to the actions or inactions of an AVI board member, staff member or program participant, or other associate, or due to the actions of a person representing an AVI partner or contractor.
- A alleged criminal offence has been committed against a child and the matter will be reported to the relevant authorities both in the Country where the crime was committed and to Australian authorities.
- Suspected harm is committed by an AVI partner where AVI program participants are placed.

When to report:

The report must be made immediately, or within 24 hours, of becoming aware of the incident, suspicion or risk.

Who to report to:

Reports must be made to one or more of the following:

- childprotection@avi.org.au
- Program Manager or Regional Director, including the Student Programs Manager
- People and Culture
- Child Protection and Safeguards Advisor/Coordinator
- AVI's Executive Manager International Services

What happens after a report:

All incident reports will be documented, investigated and responded to. All child protection reports are given a Level 4 rating in the Risk Matrix tool 'Risk Wizard'. An incident response case plan will be developed and will include:

- (a) An assessment of the incident report information,
- (b) An outline of the specific actions to be taken, a time frame, and those persons responsible for taking the action required. Actions required may include:
 - Reporting to local and/or National authorities in accordance with National Law/s, and AVI's commitment and duty of care
 - Action to be taken by Regional Director or relevant program managers

Following a formal investigation, a confirmed breach of the Child Protection Policy or Code of Conduct may lead to the instigation of performance and disciplinary procedures, which may involve termination of employment for staff, or an assignment for program participants.

No action will be taken against any person who informs AVI in good faith of incidents and risks. However, those who willfully inform AVI using false information will be subject to investigation and possible consequences as per disciplinary procedures. AVI is committed to ensuring privacy, and psychological and physical safety for individuals who report.

How to respond to children if they disclose:

The following strategies will help support children if they disclose that they have been harmed or abused:

- *Try to keep calm and give the child your attention*
- *Listen to the child, do not ask leading questions*
- *Let the child take his or her time to tell what happened*

- *Reassure the child that it is the right thing to tell*
- *Let the child use his or her own words to tell*
- *Don't make promises you can't keep*
- *Let the child know what you will do next*
- *If the child is injured seek medical attention*
- *Do not examine the children unless you are a parent or a medical practitioner*
- *Don't confront the person who has allegedly abused the child (this can endanger the person who reports or the child themselves).*

7. CONFIDENTIALITY AND SAFETY

AVI will ensure that all incidents and reports are handled according to the principles of confidentiality, safety, impartiality, procedural fairness, timeliness and accuracy.

All incidents and reports and the names of people involved, will be handled in the strictest of confidence. Details will only be disclosed on a 'need to know' basis, where required by relevant local or Australian law, or when a notification to police or appropriate authorities must be made.

8. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed and, where appropriate, updated, at least once every two years.

9. RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- AVI Code of Conduct
- AVI Child Protection Code of Conduct
- AVI Relevant HR Policies
- AVI Position on Residential Care for Children
- AVI Privacy Policy
- Australian Volunteers Program Operations Manual (Child Protection)
- AVI International Services Child Protection Operations Manual
- AVI Enterprise Agreement
- Work Health and Safety Policy
- AVI Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy
- DFAT Child Protection Policy and DFAT Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy
- ACFID Code of Conduct

10. REFERENCES

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC)
- [ACFID Code of Conduct](#)
- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities](#).
- Resolution adopted by the General Assembly; [Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children](#) [on the report of the Third Committee (A/64/434)] 64/142.
- [DFAT Child Protection Policy](#)

11. REVISION HISTORY

Date	Revision Number	Change(s)	Reference Section(s)
Feb 2007	1.0	AusAID compliance – policy rollout March 2008	
Nov 2008	1.3	Combining AVI draft with AusAID CP Policy March 2008; Incorporating AVI CPWG & Childwise comments	
Jan 2009	1.5	ACFID Child Rights Working Group & AVI TL additions	Associates Children with disabilities Guardian / parent permission
Jun 2009	1.6	Overall edit	
Jun 2010	2.0	Removal of procedural elements and risk management clause. Procedures edited slightly also	Section 6 & 7 edited. Original section 8 removed
Oct 2013	3.0	Overall edit	
Oct 2015	3.1	Minor edits Addition of social media elements to 'Expected Behaviours document'	2, 4, 5, 6 combine 5 and 6
Jan 2016	3.2	Final edit	
Mar 2016	3.3	Further formatting edits	
Aug 2016	3.4	Brand update – no content changes	
Feb 2018	3.5	Full review and update for compliance with DFAT CP Policy	All sections.
Dec 2020	4.0	Full review and edit in line with ACFID and DFAT compliance and updated global risk indicators Addition of procedural elements and reference to incident/risk reporting	All sections.