



CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY



ONLUS

***l'Albero
della Vita***

PROGETTI D'AMORE
PER I BAMBINI

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ACRONYMS:

CSP: Child Safeguarding Policy
FADV: Fondazione L'Albero della Vita

1. Introduction

Child safeguarding refers to an organisation's responsibility to always protect the children and young people they come into contact with from all forms of violence and inappropriate conduct.

In organisations, preventing abuse requires protocols and procedures but also leadership, accountability, and cultural change. It means listening to girls and boys and transforming the entire organisation's structure to put their rights, dignity, and safety at the heart of every decision.

Why a Child Safeguarding Policy

Since 1997, the aspiration for improvement, the sparkle of life in our organisation, has been developed through projects and continuous training activities to educate staff into specific and appropriate methodologies and approaches. Each time this has made it possible to demonstrate the power of our original intuition and person-oriented approach to promote social change.

This *Child Safeguarding Policy*, consisting of reflections, models, and tools, represents Fondazione L'Albero della Vita (FADV)'s full accountability and monitoring of its activities. We want to make sure that FADV's educational and project, and programmes staff do everything in their power to report and respond to the children risks of abuse and exploitation, particularly sexual exploitation.

Strategic and operational context 2020-2022

FADV adopted its first *Child Protection Policy* in 2016. This document is a revision of the previous version of the policy. It establishes the *Child Safeguarding Manager* professional profile as a pivotal element of a system aimed at monitoring and control the policy application.



2. Vision and Mission

Vision

L'Albero della Vita aspires to a world where each person can find greater self-awareness through a process of self-education aimed at continuous improvement. A world where childhood is recognised as a period having great dignity and genuine potential for innovation to be protected and developed in every environment with coherent approaches and appropriate methodologies. L'Albero della Vita's vision of the human being and his/her possible future is inspired by the principles and methods of "Pedagogy for the Third Millennium" of Fondazione Patrizio Paoletti for Development and Communication.

Mission

Since its establishment, L'Albero della Vita has been fully committed to promoting actions to **ensure well-being, protect and promote rights, and foster the development of** children, their families, and communities. For L'Albero della Vita, **ensuring children well-being** means creating opportunities for a dignified, intense, and gratifying life. It means offering children the possibility to eat appropriately, be cared for, receive medical treatment, carry out recreational, sporting, and social activities according to age, and cultivate their most intimate aspirations freely. For our organisation, the commitment to the **protection and promotion of rights** means building every project and every intervention following the guidelines defined by the United Nations International Convention on the Rights of the Child, improving life contexts such as family, school, community and making them safer, richer in opportunities, more suitable for the life of children and their constructive growth. **Promoting development** means looking at the child as he or she may become, aiming at the inner growth of a mature and responsible individual, interpreter of vibrant life, capable of contributing proactively, consciously, and responsibly to the improvement of the surrounding environment. This idea of children and the surrounding individuals' development is the founding element of L'Albero della Vita's interventions. The Foundation aim to generate change and promote sustainability in the disadvantaged contexts in which it operates.

Commitment to the protection

- **No violence against children is justifiable.**
- A rights-based approach to children care and protection requires a paradigm shift. While respecting and promoting human dignity and physical and psychological integrity, children should always be considered individuals with rights rather than 'victims'.
- The concept of dignity requires that every child be recognised, respected, and protected as a rights-holder and a unique and valuable human being with an individual personality, specific needs, interests, and privacy.
- Children's rights must be listened to and their views considered in all decision-making processes. Similarly, children's empowerment and participation shall be fundamental to childcare and protection strategies and programmes.
- Children's best interests must be a primary consideration in all matters involving or affecting them, mainly when they are victims of violence and when preventive measures are to be adopted.

3. Child Safeguarding Policy Implementation

The CSP represents the Foundation' values and applies in all countries where FADV operates.

FADV operates at different levels:

- provides protection services for minors and families: educational communities, housing for mother-child autonomy and the Foster Care Project;



- implements projects to combat child poverty and promote active citizenship in Italy and in collaboration with European partnerships;
- as an NGO recognised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it operates abroad through local and expatriate workers in protection, development, education, migration and emergency projects;
- is active in fundraising and awareness-raising campaigns.

The CSP applies to:

- members of the Executive Board;
- children involved in any FADV activities and projects, either directly implemented or supported in Italy, Europe and developing countries;
- FADV staff employed under any kind of contract (managers, volunteers, trainees, interns and FADV representatives in Italian and international structures, programmes and offices);
- staff and representatives of partner organisations and any other individual, group or organisation that has a formal/contractual relationship with FADV and requires direct contact with minors;
- sponsors, donors and visitors, journalists, testimonials and all those who come into direct contact with FADV's projects and services;
- to biological families and foster families of children attending both directly implemented and supported FADV programmes and activities;
- teachers involved in FADV programmes;
- consultants;
- providers.

The CSP is reviewed every three years when the Board of Directors is appointed. The CPI may be reviewed every time it needs to be adapted to a new scenario. In addition, annual assessments of the CPS provisions performed in a participatory manner.

4. Reference documents and guiding principles

The following documents are taken as references for the drafting of this document

- Mission and Vision;
- Policy and Methodology of Social Intervention;
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- General Comment No. 13 (2011) of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child;
- The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence;
- Keeping children Safe Child Protection Standards;
- Eurochild Child Protection Policy;
- FADV Code of Conduct.

5. Objectives

The CSP aims to ensure FADV's utmost commitment to protecting children benefiting from its projects in all circumstances. It summarises all the values and principles that FADV staff and its donors, volunteers, consultants, visitors, and suppliers must respect in their daily working relationship with the Foundation. The CSP sets out the shared operating principles and rules to ensure the safety and well-being of the children who benefit from FADV's work.

The document also aims to prevent any form of abuse against them by FADV or its partners. Having this in mind, CSP provides targeted and straightforward procedures to avoid abuse and set up a prompt response whenever abuse occurs against a child beneficiary of FADV's projects.



6. Definitions

The following definitions are those considered for applying this policy. The terminology is the same used by most international agencies and other child protection organisations.

A child, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 1 (UNCRC), is any human being under the age of eighteen.

Violence refers to any non-intentional behaviour by parents, guardians, other adults, adolescents, or children that results in potential or actual harm to the child or adolescent's health, development, or dignity. Such conduct may be intentional or unintentional and includes both acts of omission (e.g., neglect) and acts of commission (e.g., abuse).

Within this broad definition, five main categories of maltreatment can be identified: physical maltreatment, sexual abuse, psychological maltreatment, neglect or negligent treatment and exploitation.

Child maltreatment

Any act deliberately carried out by a parent or a person in a position of power, responsibility, and trust towards a child or young person causing potential or actual harm to his/her safety, well-being, dignity, and development. It encompasses all forms of physical and psychological damage having in common abuse of power and a betrayal of the child's trust by the adult.

Physical abuse

Any conduct that causes actual or potential physical harm to a child or adolescent carried out by an adult or a peer.

In contrast to other forms of maltreatment, physical maltreatment is characterised by the following elements:

- the unpredictability of conduct: the child or adolescent does not know what may trigger anger and aggression and is constantly moving in uncertainty;
- Anger attacks: aggressive behaviour determined by anger and the desire to exert substantial control over the child or adolescent. It follows that the greater the anger, the more intense the maltreatment;
- Fear is a means of controlling the child's or adolescent's behaviour. It is not uncommon for the abuser to believe that the child or adolescent must be afraid to behave appropriately. Abusers, therefore, create a climate of intimidation to correct the behaviour and gain respect and obedience. However, in this way, the child does not learn to behave correctly and grow, but only to avoid beatings.

Sexual abuse

Involving a child or adolescent, considered an object of gratification, in sexual activity, with or without physical contact, by an adult or peer. Some examples of sexual abuse are genital touching, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration, exposure to pornography, etc.

Psychological maltreatment

A behaviour repeated over time that impairs the child's or adolescent's emotional, cognitive, and relational development and self-perception. It can take many forms and often accompanies other types of maltreatment. It does not usually involve physical harm; therefore, it is difficult to prove and sometimes requires intervention by the authorities.

Some examples of psychological maltreatment to which a minor may be subjected:

- constantly belittling, humiliating and criticising;
- ridicule to belittle the child's personality, physical appearance or abilities;
- making the child feeling inadequate and unloved;
- making the child living in an atmosphere of intimidation and anxiety and make him/her victim of bullying;
- violence and abuse from others, such as parents, siblings and even pets.

Neglect and negligence

It is the inadequate attention to the child's or adolescent's material and emotional needs by parents or caregivers with the means to do so. It includes failure to protect the child from potential harm and to ensure and protect his/her basic needs such as medical care, education, and adequate emotional development, often to the point of exposing him/her to physical and emotional harm.

Exploitation

The use of the child for the benefit, gratification, or profit of third parties. Such activities expose the child to unfair, cruel, and dangerous treatment and are detrimental to the child's emotional, social, moral, and physical development. Two main categories of exploitation of children and adolescents can be identified:

- sexual exploitation of children and adolescents: by sexual exploitation, we mean any activity in which a person takes advantage of his or her position of power over, trust in, and vulnerability of a child or adolescent for sexual purposes and economic, social, or political gain. The child is thus exploited both as a sexual object and as a commercial object. Some examples of sexual exploitation: child prostitution, trafficking of minors for sexual abuse and exploitation, child pornography, sexual slavery.
- Economic exploitation of children and adolescents. Economic exploitation means the employment of a child or adolescent in work activities that are particularly risky and compromise their mental and physical well-being and jeopardise their right to education, health, and family. Economic exploitation implies a profit.

7. Basic procedures set out by FADV's CSP

The Foundation adopts a Code of Conduct describing the appropriate behaviour to be adopted by its employees and partners. The Code of Conduct is a strategic tool to ensure the well-being and safety of the children's beneficiaries of FADV's projects. It provides a model of behaviour that FADV considers suitable for establishing a relationship between adults and children.

Code of Conduct

FADV staff, its partners and visitors who come into contact with children are expected to:

- treat children with respect, always recognising them as subjects of right, regardless of race, sex, colour, language, disability, religion, political or another opinion, national, ethnic or social origin;
- never violate children's rights;
- developing children's skills and potential;
- take children's views seriously and respect their opinions;
- always inform children of their rights;
- taking care of the children's environment, ensuring their safety and well-being (see Environment Policy);
- encourage children to express themselves freely;
- never be alone with a child;
- avoid any possible ambiguous situation that could lead to a complaint;
- prevent high-risk situations and promptly react if abuse occurs;
- comply with local, national and international child protection laws;
- respect children's privacy.

All images must respect the dignity of children and must never depict them in a submissive or vulnerable condition. Children should always be dressed and depicted in scenes of everyday daily life.



FADV staff, its partners and visitors who come into contact with children are required NOT to:

- resort to corporal punishment and using offensive and humiliating language in the presence of a child;
- humiliate, discriminate against children or behave contemptuously towards them;
- have sexual relations with children or involve children in any kind of sexual activity;
- have attitudes and physical contact with children that may be considered inappropriate or deplorable according to their culture and traditions;
- organise activities that may expose children to risks of abuse;
- establish a relationship with children that may constitute abuse or even exploitation;
- take photos or record videos that may result in any way harm children;
- disclose sensitive data that can help locate children. They should never circulate on the net, blogs or social networks or be accessible to the public.

8. Appointment and tasks of a Child Safeguarding Manager

The *Child Safeguarding Manager-Focal Point* is responsible for overseeing that the policy is correctly implemented and that its provisions are followed. The role must conform to the nature and structure of the organisation, and the designated person must have sufficient support to carry out the task. **That is why**

in FADV, two Child Safeguarding Managers-Focal Points have been created, one for programmes and one for services.

At each level of the organisation and in the working environment, one or more persons should be appointed to discuss child protection issues. The contact details for these people should be made known to all so that anyone concerned about child protection issues can contact them.

The person appointed as *Child Safeguarding Focal Point* is responsible for listening to all reports of child safeguarding issues within the organisation and taking action to address them. The Focal Point is also appointed so that children can refer to a trusted adult and be listened to if they want to report a problem. The *Child Safeguarding Manager* is supported by the Human Resources department and the *Quality Assurance Manager*.

The *FADV Child Safeguarding Manager* is committed to providing support, supervision, and regular training appropriate to the knowledge of staff and the local context. Such support is shared in a participatory way so that staff members are encouraged to raise concerns and issues.

This also applies to Country/Project Managers outside the Milan office who are responsible for:

- translate the *policy* where necessary;
- ensure that the protective measures provided are in line with local legislation;
- train and inform local CSP staff.

The *Child Safeguarding Manager* is in charge of providing ad hoc training, either direct or cascaded, to people appointed:

- the critical elements of this *policy*;
- definitions of possible forms of maltreatment and exploitation and the signs by which to recognise them;
- the procedures for reporting suspected violations of the *policy*.

Child Safeguarding managers are responsible for cultural promotion and preventive/educational dimension, as well as for receiving reports (ensuring that people involved in FADV projects and activities are clear about the measures to be taken and promptly report potential situations of danger to children and young people) and following up/taking the necessary safeguarding and protection measures.

Finally, it is the responsibility of *Child Safeguarding Managers*:

- that all staff apply CSP in project actions;
- that all staff assess and analyse child protection risk;
- that all staff ensure that partners, birth and foster families, counsellors and suppliers are informed about the CSP;
- ensure that the communities where you work are aware of the CSP.

9. Chains of responsibility

The *Children Safeguarding Manager*, in his capacity as the Head of *Policy*:

- establishes and maintains a centralised reporting system, ensuring the control of the
- handling of cases concerning alleged violations of the *policy*;
- establishes and maintains contact with the managers of all national and international FADV projects and services for the protection of girls, children and adolescents;
- prepares the communications to be submitted to the Executive Board by the Director-General;
- regularly check and update this *policy*, at least every three years or at a shorter time if deemed necessary.

The signalling mechanism is as follows:

CASE REPORT

Activation of **Child SafeGuarding Manager-Focal Point**, supported by **HR** and **Quality Assurance Manager** for information collection. In detail:

SUSPICION NOT CONFIRMED		SUSPICION CONFIRMED	
Closure and communication to the Executive Board	Archiving	In-depth investigations	Instruction of the internal management board
		Internal case (FADV)	External case
		Reporting to the Executive Board and Supervisory Board	 Reporting to competent authorities
		Definition of sanctions in proportion to the type of violation of the policy	
		Applying and communicating a sanction	Termination of contract

CASE CLOSURE

Any alleged breach of the policy must be reported and investigated according to the policy's provisions. Any violation of the policy constitutes a disciplinary offence that may be sanctioned, in the most severe cases, by the termination of the employment contract under applicable labour legislation. To make a report fill in the form; it is possible can anticipate or follow the written notice with an oral communication to the Child Safeguarding Managers or the contacts listed in the policy.

The procedural actions taken by the Child Safeguarding Manager-Focal Point include, but are not limited to:

1. collect information and documentation on the incident;
2. carry out an internal investigation (including interviews with witnesses);
3. temporarily suspend the reported person from his/her activities, if related to projects with minors and vulnerable adults, during the investigation;
4. inform the person concerned of the allegations made against him/her;
5. allowing the suspect to provide his or her version of the events before any determination of guilt or innocence is reached;
6. ensure that the victim receives psychological and socio-economic protection and support (if necessary and proportionate);
7. ensure that the person who issued the alert is kept informed of the progress of the procedure initiated;
8. where an offence is suspected, report it to the competent authority.

All persons subject to this policy must report abuse. No form of coercion, intimidation, retaliation, or reprisal against them will be tolerated, including when providing information or assistance in an investigation.



10. Staff recruitment

The recruiting method for staff, counsellors, volunteers, members, managers, interns, and trainees shall reflect FADV's commitment to advocacy and protection of minors. It is mandatory to ensure that all necessary verifications are performed. All communications and procedures are in place to exclude anyone unsuitable to work with children. Potential damage can therefore be prevented or reduced as early as in the recruitment process.

When recruiting new staff, FADV assesses:

- motivation to work on child and adolescent issues;
- the ability to respect the rights of children and adolescents;
- understanding the material and emotional needs of children and adolescents in local contexts;
- knowledge of international debates on sensitive issues;
- values such as honesty, non-discrimination, reliability and fairness;
- references;
- Criminal records documentation.

Minimum actions required in the HR department

- Follow the *policy* guidelines when recruiting staff;
- Ensure that new employees have read, understood, and signed the Code of Conduct and the CSP.

11. Training plan

The plan is organised by training modules, divided by programme/service area, as follows:

- knowledge of the *policy* and its operational implications;
- knowledge of internal reporting procedures;
- methodologies to bring out problems/concerns;
- managing the relationship with the *caregivers* of the children involved in the reported events.

12. Assessment and renewal

The *policy* is updated at least once every three years. FADV must carry out an annual self-assessment of the *policy* implementation to track the process for ensuring children's protection and identify areas for improvement. A specific improvement plan is then prepared based on the results of the self-assessment.

13. Communication and media

The creation, collection, and dissemination of images of minors must consider their protection without violating their dignity or putting them at risk.

FADV personnel must minimise any possible situation that may represent a risk by imposing

- respect of the privacy of children portrayed in photos and videos;
- informing minors, parents or guardians before taking photographs or video recordings;
- informing minors, parents or guardians of the intended use of such images, using the form provided by FADV;
- obscuring, not showing the faces of, or otherwise making unidentifiable, children who have been subjected to violence, exploitation, abused or are in any way particularly vulnerable. In addition, their real names must be changed, and such change duly reported. Geographical references to places, houses and streets, which may identify such children, should also be omitted;
- respect the dignity of children portrayed in photos and videos;
- do not take or use images of children naked or in poses that may appear inappropriate;
- pay particular attention to the use of images with vulnerable subjects (e.g., people with disabilities, refugee children, minorities), always ensuring that their dignity is respected;
- store images and videos in the FADV database, access to which is restricted to the staff using such material for work;
- ensure compliance with this behaviour in all work processes;
- ensure that external suppliers also comply with these rules while carrying out work for FADV;
- Ensure to share these rules with your partners that they are paid due respect in all activities for which FADV is responsible.



ADHERENCE TO EU VALUE

By the adoption of Child Safeguarding Policy, FADV works for a widespread diffusion of EU values: **inclusion, tolerance, justice, solidarity** and **non-discrimination prevail**. These values are an integral part of our organization life:

HUMAN DIGNITY

Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected, protected and constitutes the real basis of fundamental rights.

FREEDOM

Freedom of movement gives citizens the right to move and reside freely within the Union. Individual freedoms such as respect for private life, freedom of thought, religion, assembly, expression and information are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

DEMOCRACY

The functioning of the EU is founded on representative democracy. Being a European citizen also means enjoying political rights. Every adult EU citizen has the right to stand as a candidate and to vote in elections to the European Parliament. EU citizens have the right to stand as candidate and to vote in their country of residence, or in their country of origin.

EQUALITY

Equality is about equal rights for all citizens before the law. The principle of equality between women and men underpins all European policies and is the basis for European integration. It applies in all areas. The principle of equal pay for equal work became part of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Although inequalities still exist, the EU has made significant progress.

RULE OF LAW

The EU is based on the rule of law. Everything the EU does is founded on treaties, voluntarily and democratically agreed by its EU countries. Law and justice are upheld by an independent judiciary. The EU countries gave final jurisdiction to the European Court of Justice which judgements have to be respected by all.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. These cover the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, the right to the protection of your personal data, and or the right to get access to justice.





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