



Guidance Note on Applying Child Safeguarding Standards at IFRC and National Society Hosted Youth Activities Involving People Under the Age of 18 Years

Purpose

The purpose of this guidance note is to support Red Cross and Red Crescent personnel responsible for organizing IFRC led youth events that involve people under the age of 18 years.

In particular, this guidance note supports organizers of activities to take concrete and practical steps to ensure people under the age of 18 years experience Red Cross and Red Crescent environments that meet their best interests and that are safe and free of any harm.

Background

It is a minimum standard and essential practice for all humanitarian agencies and organizations working with people under the age of 18 years to have in place safeguards. These safeguards help protect from violence, abuse and exploitation and also support decisions being made in the best interest of the child.

The IFRC has a Child Safeguarding Policy that provides an overview of its commitments to working with people under the age of 18, centered around the best interest of the child; acceptable and unacceptable behaviours; and where and how to report any concerns.

Definitions

Child: A human being below the age of eighteen years.¹

Child safeguarding: Refers to the broad obligation on IFRC personnel, partners, suppliers, and contractors to ensure that the design and delivery of programmes and organisational programmes are in the best interests of the child, do not expose children to adverse impacts, including the risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect and that any concerns about children's safety within the communities where they work are appropriately reported and responded to.²

Peer educator: An individual who has advanced experience on peer education and promotes peer education in the broader community not limiting it to organised workshops or formal educational settings.

Peer to peer facilitator: An individual who is able to support, assist, and encourage their own peers. A peer is someone that you see as your friend or colleague or someone that you can support.

¹ IFRC. (2013). *Child Protection Policy*.

² DFAT. (2017). *Child Protection Policy 2017*. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/pages/child-protection-policy>

Minimum Actions for IFRC or National Society Event Organizers

BEFORE EVENT

- 1 Share the IFRC (or relevant National Society) Child Safeguarding Policy with all facilitators and participants.
> media.ifrc.org/ifrc/document/child-safeguarding
- 2 Require all facilitators and participants to submit a copy of the Child Safeguarding Policy with their signature on the policy acknowledging they have read the policy and agree to its terms.
- 3 Have all facilitators complete the online IFRC course on the Child Safeguarding Policy.
A certificate of completion should be shared with organizers prior to the event.
> ifrc.csod.com/client/ifrc/default.aspx
- 4 Ensure all adults interacting directly with children have completed within the last 3 years, in their home country or country of residence, a screening such as police record check, and/or at least two references confirming the person does not pose a risk to children. For facilitators or other staff that are under 18 years, ensure they have provided at least two references confirming they do not pose a risk to other children.
- 5 Aim to have an even mix of male and female facilitators. This is important to help make participants under the age of 18 years feel comfortable talking to and sharing any concerns
- 6 Among facilitators, assign at least one focal point on child protection issues; ideally there can be two, one female and one male. The focal point(s) will be responsible for ensuring the actions in this checklist are completed.
- 7 Map out points of risk and implement solutions. For instance:
 - a) are there any points at the facility that are not well-lit? Can lighting be added to those?
 - b) are there storage spaces or other rooms/spaces that can be accessed and hard to see?
Can these spaces be blocked off, locked or otherwise secured to limit access?
- 8 If the event involves staying overnight ensure:
 - a) that people under the age of 18 years and their parents/guardians have signed a consent form.
 - b) that sleeping spaces where people under the age of 18 are sharing rooms are same-sex
 - c) that the sleeping spaces for facilitators and other adult staff or volunteers are near the ones of the same sex for participants, i.e. adult female facilitators
- 9 Ensure IFRC policies for photos and social media are shared and applied.

DURING EVENT

- 1 Introduce the focal point(s) and have them introduce themselves and make clear they are available to talk and receive any complaints or concerns. Have the child protection focal point(s) brief all participants and facilitators on key elements regarding:
 - a) Safe and unsafe actions during the event with people under the age of 18 years
 - b) Policies for photos and social media
 - c) Where to report any protection concerns
 - d) Who to talk to if there are any questions or ways to improve safeguarding during the event
- 2 Place in visible locations (hallways, event room, bathrooms, etc.) a poster with:
 - a) key messages: this is a safe and nonviolent space and your voice matters.
 - b) where to report any concerns about any concerns around protection (including internal systems and local authorities based on local laws and regulations).
- 3 Ensure that all visitors to the event, of any organization including the National Society or IFRC, sign-in and sign-out and carry visible identification while at the event.

AFTER EVENT

- 1 As part of any follow-up survey or reporting, include questions for participants about:
 - a) Did you feel safe and supported during the event?
 - b) Was it clear to you during the event what were considered safe or unsafe actions expected from all participants and facilitators?
 - c) Did you feel confident in knowing where and how to report any concerns of unsafe actions?
 - d) Did you witness any incident of concern or hear about an incident?
 - e) Do you have any other comments, observations, or concerns to share?
- 2 Develop a safeguarding report – even if there are now reports of any concerns during the event. The report should set out any concerns raised, actions taken and the conclusion to the report. The report should be shared with the organizational lead for the event who will share with the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI).

Safe and Unsafe Interactions

The following apply to all interactions with people under the age of 18 years, regardless of location, culture, or setting.

- Any contact between IFRC or National Society personnel and people under the age of 18 years should be visible to others. For example, include another person when meeting with a person under the age of 18 years, or if privacy is needed, it can be out of hearing but ensure it is within sight of others.
- Do not allow touching of persons under the age of 18 years to occur out of visibility of others, even in the event of attending an injured person. If privacy is needed, have another staff, volunteer or participant present.
- At least two staff or volunteers should accompany people under the age of 18 years on overnight trips, during activities, while in transport or during any unavoidable out-of-event contact. If two staff or volunteers are not available, ensure that at least two event participants are together with any one staff or volunteer.
- Limit touching of persons under the age of 18 years to “safe” areas of the body such as hand-to-shoulder.
- Any contact that is resisted or refused by a person under the age of 18 years must be respected. Any sexual contact from an adult to a person under the age of 18, even if consented by the person under 18 years, is not acceptable.
- Contact between staff and volunteers with participants under the age of 18 years should only occur in groups, and never on a one-to-one basis.
- Ensure undisturbed, safe, respectful access to facilities, including hygiene facilities (e.g. showers, lockers, bathrooms, etc.), for all participants and groups.
- Do not allow participants of considerable age differences (e.g. a 13-year-old with a 17-year-old), or any staff or volunteers or visitors, from showering at the same time as people under the age of 18 years, even when of the same sex, where bathrooms and showers are shared.
- Prohibit the use of alcohol or illicit drugs for participants, staff and volunteers during the event. Alcohol and drugs have been consistently shown to increase the risk of violence against children. Also, as per most national laws, for health and safety reasons, persons under the age of 18 are not permitted to have alcohol or illicit drugs.
- At the end of an event, be sure that no one person under the age of 18 years is left behind alone, social media policies are followed for exchanging phone numbers and social medial contacts, etc.

Remember How to Report

If you have any concerns that a person under the age of 18 is being harmed, you are **required** to report. You do not need to ask further questions of the person/child, do not agree to keep it a secret, and do not make promises that you cannot keep. Try your best to be empathetic, listen, take notes, and be clear that you need to make a report. Take any steps needed to make sure the person under 18 years feels safe.

You can report to:

- Human Resources Department; or
- to the personnel's own line manager(s); or
- any Senior Manager; or
- the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI) department: **report.concerns@ifrc.org**; or
- IFRC confidential hotline available in multiple languages for IFRC personnel located in any location: EQS Integrity Line: **ifrc.integrityplatform.org**