



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Children's HopeChest, Inc. is committed to the holistic care of children and believes that each person is a special creation, made in the image of God. This policy is instituted to govern the interactions of Children's HopeChest, Inc., ("**HopeChest**") staff members, contractors, partners, sponsors, travelers, donors, and any other individuals and/or groups who engage with any children associated with our projects and/or programs at a CarePoint and in their immediate and/or surrounding communities. HopeChest implements reasonable and appropriate measures designed to prevent abuse and safeguard children participating in its programs.

Additionally, we want to ensure that none of our staff, volunteers, contractors, partners, donors, travelers, and other stakeholders engage in behavior that could allow abuse to occur or to have any behavior that could be misinterpreted by children, their families or other adults as constituting, or leading to abuse. ☒ HopeChest strictly prohibits any sexual or romantic relationship between staff, volunteers, contractors, travelers, or partners and any program participant under the age of 18, regardless of local age of consent laws. While legal definitions of age of consent may vary by country, HopeChest strictly prohibits any sexual or romantic relationship between staff, volunteers, contractors, travelers, or partners and any program participant under the age of 18, regardless of local law.

Definition of a Child

Children's HopeChest, Inc. defines a child as anyone under the age of 18. This is consistent with the definition used by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. While this policy is specific for children 18 and under, it is important to note that we apply these standards of care and policy for all youth in our program to also include young adults participating in HopeChest programs.

Definition of Abuse

Children's HopeChest is opposed to all forms of child abuse, exploitation, and harm. For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Physical Abuse: Any act causing or likely to cause physical harm or injury to a child, including hitting, shaking, burning, or otherwise physically harming a child.

Sexual Abuse: Any actual or threatened sexual activity involving a child, including sexual contact, exploitation, or exposure to sexually explicit material or conduct.

Emotional Abuse: Conduct that harms a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth, including intimidation, humiliation, isolation, or verbal abuse.

Neglect:

Failure to provide for a child's basic physical, emotional, or medical needs when responsible for their care and when the caregiver has the reasonable ability or access to resources to meet those needs. Lack of resources due to poverty alone does not constitute neglect.

Exploitation: Use of a child for personal, financial, social, or other benefits, including child labor, trafficking, or inducement into inappropriate activities.

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Online Abuse: Any form of abuse occurring through digital or electronic means, including inappropriate communication, solicitation, or unauthorized sharing of images or personal information.

Bullying: Repeated aggressive behavior intended to intimidate, harm, or coerce a child physically, emotionally, or socially.

Harmful Cultural Practices: Practices that may be socially accepted in certain communities but are harmful to children, including early or forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), or other forms of coercion or discrimination.

Grooming Behavior: Actions or patterns of behavior intended to establish trust or emotional connection with a child to facilitate abuse or exploitation.

Abuse of Power or Authority: Use of a position of trust, influence, or authority to exploit or improperly influence a child or young person.

Scope and Applicability

This policy applies to all Children’s HopeChest employees, contractors, board members, partners, volunteers, donors, sponsors, and travelers. Compliance with this policy is a condition of engagement in HopeChest activities, travel opportunities, or volunteer roles.

Code of Conduct and Expected Behavior

All Children’s HopeChest staff, individuals and/or groups associated with traveling to countries and communities on behalf of Children’s HopeChest must be and remain accountable and avoid the appearance of inappropriate behavior for the protection of all involved parties. Travelers should be aware and attentive to the perception of their relationship with vulnerable children, particularly because perceptions of foreign visitors and their intentions can be highly inaccurate and culturally unacceptable. Travelers should remain vigilant about how their relationships and interactions with vulnerable children are perceived. Misinterpretations of travelers' intentions are common, and behaviors that may seem harmless can be misunderstood or culturally inappropriate.

Consent, Privacy and Confidentiality

All staff members, contractors, partners, sponsors, travelers, donors, and any other individuals and/or groups who engage with any children to adhere to the following rules:

- Children’s HopeChest U.S will conduct background checks on its employees before they are hired.
- Children’s HopeChest Country Offices will conduct background checks on all employees before they are hired.
- All travelers going on a Children’s HopeChest trip, over the age of 18, will be required to complete and pass a background check.
- Children’s HopeChest will obtain parental/guardian consent before a child is registered to be a participant in our ministry program(s). This includes but is not limited to permission for photos to be used for child registration (profiling), photos on our community pages, website, social media, photos that could be used for marketing and/or fundraising purposes, photos, quotes or stories for reporting purposes.
- If a child is abused in any form, the details of the situation will not be shared publicly with a donor, traveler, or others who are not employees of the organization. Nothing in this policy limits reporting to law enforcement, regulatory authorities, or other legally required disclosures. All cases will be

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handled between the Children's HopeChest U.S. and international office(s) with the authorities of the respective community, region, and/or country to abide by local, regional and/or national accordance with applicable laws.

- Children's HopeChest will not share medically sensitive information about children (or their family members) in our programs with donors, travelers or others who are not employees of the organization.
 - Any information related to known or unknown medical issues should never be shared or made public or communicated via the internet or other communication channels by travelers.
 - **HIV Status:** Children's HopeChest expressly forbids the public communication of a child or caregiver's HIV/AIDS status without changing the name and clearly indicating that names have been changed to protect the individual's privacy.

Mandatory Reporting and Response

Any staff member, traveler, donor, partner, or volunteer who suspects, witnesses, or becomes aware of abuse, exploitation, or inappropriate behavior involving a child must report the concern immediately. Reports should be made to the trip leader (if applicable), and a designated Children's HopeChest representative or Child Protection Officer. Reports must be made to the designated HopeChest Child Protection Officer within twenty-four (24) hours and documented in accordance with HopeChest's incident reporting procedures.

Failure to report a concern may result in disciplinary action.

Children's HopeChest strictly prohibits retaliation against any individual who raises a concern or reports suspected abuse in good faith.

Incident Documentation and Record Retention

All concerns, allegations, reports, or incidents involving suspected or actual abuse, exploitation, or violations of this Child Protection Policy shall be documented promptly and accurately by the designated Children's HopeChest Child Protection Officer. Such documentation shall include, to the extent reasonably available, the nature of the concern or allegation, the date and time of the report, individuals involved, actions taken in response, and any follow-up measures implemented.

Children's HopeChest shall maintain confidential incident records related to safeguarding concerns in accordance with its internal record-retention policies and applicable law. Access to such records shall be limited to authorized personnel with a legitimate need to know for the purposes of investigation, reporting, or compliance.

All records shall be stored securely in a manner designed to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the individuals involved and to comply with applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

Prohibited Behaviors

Children's HopeChest Staff, travelers and donors must never:

- Develop sexual or romantic relationships with children
- Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative, coercive, binding, or abusive
- Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse
- Take photos that diminish the dignity of the child or their family for marketing, personal, or

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fundraising purposes. This includes photos or videos of deformities, malnourishment, special mental or physical needs, and nudity of any kind.

- Share personal financial information with a child or his/her family/guardian.
- Exchange personal contact information, including but not limited to: personal or work address, email, social media accounts or phone numbers with a child or his/her family or guardian. This is a protective measure for staff members, travelers, and the children/families in our program.

Under no circumstances may a staff member or traveler accept the invitation to lodge or spend the night with a CarePoint child/children or their family – whether a Children’s HopeChest representative is present or not.

A Children’s HopeChest staff member is required to be present during any visits by volunteer travelers to the CarePoint, homestead/home, or school.

Public References and Social Media

Any public/external reference to a child by a donor, traveler, staff member, should only include a first name. It is not permissible to associate a child’s photo/update/information with their full name. This includes any social media platforms, email exchange, videos, and text messaging.

Training, Vetting, and Partner Compliance

All Children’s HopeChest staff interacting with children are required to complete child-protection training upon onboarding and annually thereafter and undergo appropriate background checks in accordance with U.S. and local legal requirements.

All partners and travelers must sign a written acknowledgment of this policy, which shall be incorporated by reference into all applicable agreements. Failure to comply may result in termination of partnership or denial of travel approval.

Enforcement and Consequences

Travelers are expected to be familiar with information provided by Children’s HopeChest (verbal or in written form) on culturally appropriate ways to show care, concern, or affection. Please refer to our travel guidelines and cultural tips for more information.

Violations of this policy may result in removal from sponsoring a child, termination of volunteer or partner status, or exclusion from HopeChest travel and/or activities. The laws governing child protection in a specific country could and would apply where necessary. If a violation of the rules and guidelines occurs while an individual is on a trip, the individual in violation will be removed from the trip and sent home immediately at their own expense.

Any employee of Children’s HopeChest who violates the terms of this policy is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. HopeChest reserves the right to investigate alleged violations of this policy and may impose interim protective measures, including suspension and pending investigation. Final determinations shall be made by designated leadership.