



Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy

1. Introduction

There are 25.4 million refugees worldwide. Restarting life in a new country is always going to be a daunting experience. First Hike Project Inc. (**FHP**) is an Australian not for profit organisation that exists to provide a safe, cost-free and fully catered hiking and camping trip to newly arrived refugees. It is designed to welcome participants and equip them with a new-found understanding of what lies beyond the suburbs, helping them to feel more at home in Australia.

FHP activities involves direct contact with children and young people. FHP is committed to keeping children and young people safe from harm and abuse. FHP supports the rights of children and young people and will act without hesitation to ensure a child safe environment is maintained at all times.

FHP HAS A ZERO TOLERANCE APPROACH TO CHILD ABUSE.

2. Scope

This Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy (**Policy**) applies to all board members, staff, volunteers, contractors, visitors, donors and sponsors (**Personnel**) in Australia.

3. Guiding Principles

The guiding principles in the development of this Policy include:

- Zero tolerance of child and young people abuse and exploitation
- Recognition of children's and young person's best interests
- Responsibility for child and young people protection
- Operating and procedural fairness
- Implementing risk management procedures

As such, this Policy is in place to:

- Provide a practical guide to the protection of children and young people from abuse
- Provide a risk management strategy to prevent child abuse
- Protect FHP employees and volunteers from unfair processes
- Provide a clear guide on what to do if child abuse is suspected

4. Definitions

Child or Young Person means a person under the age of 18 years.

Child abuse encompasses all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as "every human below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."

Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

Emotional abuse is a persistent attack on a child or young person's self-esteem. It can take the form of name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child or young person.

Neglect is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, and supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development are at risk.

Sexual abuse is the actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child. Sexual abuse includes rape, incest and all forms of sexual activity involving children, including exposing children to pornography or taking pornographic photos.

Commercial sexual exploitation is where a child is sexually abused or exploited in return for cash or for kind.

Child protection is defined as an activity or initiative designed to protect children from any form of harm, particularly arising from child abuse or neglect.

5. Recruitment and Screening

FHP has a recruitment and selection process in place to ensure appropriate selection of new Personnel.

FHP's selection process for Personnel includes the submission of a curriculum vitae or resume, interview and referee checks.

All FHP Personnel are required to have a Working With Children Card.

FHP will not permit any Personnel to work with children if they pose an unacceptable risk to children's safety or well-being.

All Personnel will be given this Policy before and on acceptance of employment or participation in FHP programs.

6. Code of Conduct

FHP Personnel are responsible for maintaining a professional role with children and young people.

Clear boundaries have been created that serve to protect everyone from misunderstandings or a violation of the professional relationship. The FHP Child and Young Person Protection Code of Conduct (CPCOC) (Addendum 2) outlines the boundaries for behaviour of FHP Personnel at all times when interacting with children and young people.

The FHP CPOC is required to be signed by all Personnel upon commencement of their engagement with FHP.

Failure to comply with this code may result in disciplinary procedures, restriction of duties, termination of services, legal action or criminal investigation.

7. Use of children's images and personal information for promotion, fundraising and development education

When photographing or filming a child or young person for work related purposes, FHP Personnel must:

- Before photographing or filming a child or young person, obtain consent from the child or young person or a parent or guardian of the child or young person. This will be done at time of registration of the event and a list of all responses will be available to all personnel.
- Before photographing or filming a child or young person, assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images
- Ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children and young people in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children and young people should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive
- Ensure images are honest representatives of the context and the facts
- Ensure file labels do not reveal identifying information about a child or young person when sending images electronically

8. Awareness and adherence to the Policy

This Policy is provided to all FHP Personnel upon engagement with the organisation. All Personnel are required to sign and abide by the CPCOC.

9. Responsibilities

9.1 FHP Personnel have a responsibility to keep children and young people safe and as such are required to:

- Never abuse or exploit a child or young person
- Never behave in a manner that may put a child or young person at risk
- Always treat children and young people with respect to their rights, integrity and dignity
- Report any child or young person protection or abuse concerns in accordance with this Policy and partner state/territory guidelines
- Comply with this Policy and CPCOC
- Comply with FHP's Code of Conduct

9.2 Parents/Guardians and family members over 18 years are:

- Expected to understand and act in line with this Policy, including reporting any suspected child abuse to FHP (whether the suspected perpetrator is within or outside of FHP)
- Involved in the promotion of a safe, inclusive and supportive environment
- Encouraged to provide feedback
- Encouraged to promote this Policy and practices contained therein

10. Personal conduct outside of work hours or while representing FHP

All FHP Personnel are required to be aware of the principles of this Policy and how their behaviour while working/volunteering and outside of those times may be perceived. Actions taken by Personnel that are contradicting to this Policy may be considered a breach of this Policy.

11. Reporting suspected child abuse

ALL CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE MUST BE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY.

Reporting suspected child abuse or mistreatment is mandatory. Addendum 3 outlines legislated mandatory reporting requirements. An Accident/Incident Report outlines the procedures when an allegation has been made. As part of the procedure, the Authorised Officer(s) and the Board are informed and then others as needed.

12. Responding to reports of child abuse

Following an allegation of child abuse, FHP will conduct a preliminary assessment of the situation and determine whether on the basis of the information at hand there has been a criminal act or a breach of code of conduct.

If it is clear that a crime has been committed, it will be reported to the appropriate law enforcements authorities and consideration given to whether any administrative investigation will be postponed.

If there has been a breach of the code of conduct, then a formal internal investigation process will be undertaken by FHP board members:

- Gather and study background material and documentary evidence
- Interview complainant
- Interview victims if different from above
- Interview witnesses if they exist
- Interview subject of complaint
- Write investigation report
- Conclude the investigation with recommendations

13. Resources

Code of Conduct
Safeguarding Children Practice & Behaviour Guidelines

14. Review

This Policy is reviewed on an annual basis.