

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

## 1. PURPOSE

AVI has a strong commitment to the safety, wellbeing and protection of children<sup>1</sup>. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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

### 5.1 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.

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.

### 5.2 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.

### **5.3 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. 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.

## **7. POLICY REVIEW**

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

## **8. 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

## 9. 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](#)

## 10. 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.