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Changes to the CARE Australia Child Protection Policy

July 2022



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The [CARE Australia Child Protection Policy](#) (the Policy) states CARE Australia's commitments and approach to the protection and safeguarding of children. It complements the [CARE International Safeguarding Policy](#).

The Policy was recently reviewed to ensure alignment with accreditation and legislative requirements and reflect best practice. This was also an opportunity to clarify a number of points in the Policy, to ensure its successful implementation.

What are the changes?

It is important that all personnel read the Policy in full. However, we've listed below the most significant changes made to the Policy:

Principles

We affirmed our commitments that the best interests of the child will be the primary consideration in all actions concerning children; to take a survivor-centered approach; and to cooperate with everyone we engage with to manage risks to children.

Scope of the Policy

The old policy included "all staff where CA has a presence" in scope, which we identified was not that clear, so the new policy states that all personnel of Lead Member Country Offices and staff, volunteers and interns who are directly involved in the delivery of programs or projects managed or funded in whole or in part by CARE Australia in non-lead member countries are in scope. They are collectively referred to as "CARE Partners". CARE Partners and CARE Australia personnel are collectively referred to as "CARE People". We've also clarified who is considered to be a Partner. Visitors are now included in the scope only where specifically mentioned.

Partnering with other organisations

The Policy states what compliance means and outlines the requirement to complete a regular assessment of CARE Partners and Partners' child protection and safeguarding practices, and to support them to strengthen their practices.

The section then outlines contractual obligations that must be placed on Partners to comply with the Policy, which is similar to the old policy.

Risk Assessments

The risk assessment section has been expanded to provide details on that process.

Survivor-Centred Approach

This section was reframed to consider the unique needs of the child. The requirement to refer victim survivors to support as needed was in a different section but moved under this heading.

Recruitment and Selection

The Policy clarifies that recruitment guidelines are for CARE People to apply to their personnel (meaning for personnel in both CARE Australia and other CARE member countries). While we're responsible for checking that Partners have appropriate HR mechanisms so that we can be confident that they're recruiting child safe people (done as part of due diligence and risk assessment), we're not responsible for the engagement of Partner personnel so cannot impose screening processes.

The Policy also clarifies what a "change of circumstances" is (which triggers the need for a new criminal check, as per the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Child Protection Policy). The requirement to inform CARE Australia should any personnel be alleged to have committed, be arrested for or be convicted of, criminal offenses related to child abuse was in another section of the old policy, and has been moved to this section.

Code of Conduct

The requirement for employment contracts to contain provisions for immediate suspension of any employee who is under investigation for breach of the Policy or the Code of Conduct for the Protection of the Child has been expanded to cover all CARE People (previously only applied to CARE Australia).

Use of child photos, images and information

Social media and encrypted messaging platforms (eg. WhatsApp, Telegram) are now specifically mentioned in the Policy, which also specifies that consent must be age appropriate and that it can be revoked at any time.

Reporting and responding to allegations

The Policy clarifies that children and community members must be clear about ways to report concerns, not just CARE People and Partners.

Throughout the Policy, the Director of Strategy and Enabling Services (Director SES) has replaced the Chief Operating Officer (COO) as the person with responsibility for decisions related to reporting and investigations, together with the Country Director.

CARE People and Partners are required to report child abuse of any kind to the donor, irrespective of the finding of the investigation.

A Safeguarding Report and Investigations flowchart is available to illustrate how reports and investigations are managed.

Definitions

A child is defined in the Policy as a person under the age of 18 years, regardless of national laws. This is in line with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child and the CARE International standard.

Child abuse and child exploitation have been defined separately (they were previously defined together). Definitions of child ill-treatment and working with children have also been included.

Code of Conduct for the Protection of the Child

There are several changes to the Code of Conduct for the Protection of the Child, located at Annex 2 of the Policy including:

- The scope of the Code of Conduct has been adjusted to reflect the clarified scope of the Policy. It applies to CARE People, Partners and Visitors. CARE People and Partners are required to sign the Code of Conduct, and CARE People are responsible for Visitors adhering to its standards.
- The Code of Conduct has been changed to reflect that it is a 'set of clear rules' rather than an 'illustrative guide'. This means that those who are within the scope of the Policy must abide by the Code of Conduct.
- A requirement has been added that CARE People and Partners will not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while engaging with an unsupervised child (noting that this does not apply to an individual's own children).

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