

Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Volunteers at Aishworya Children's Home

1. Introduction

Thank you for choosing to volunteer at Aishworya Children's Home. Before you begin, it's important for you to understand that as a volunteer, you will be in a position of responsibility, power and trust with our children. This means that you have a responsibility to ensure they are protected from abuse and exploitation by adhering to these guidelines.

We hope you enjoy your stay at Aishworya. If you have any questions about these guidelines, please feel free to ask the Aishworya staff. In addition, please read our volunteer's handbook for additional information.

2. Definitions of child abuse and exploitation

As a person in a position of responsibility, power and trust, it is important for you to be aware of what is constituted as abuse and exploitation.

Physical Abuse: the actual or potential physical harm from interaction or lack of interaction which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust (WHO 1999).

Sexual Abuse: the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violate the laws and social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by any activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. This may include but is not limited to the inducement or coercion of the child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; the exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances, internet pictures and materials (WHO 1999).

Neglect and negligent treatment: is the inattention or omission on the part of the caregiver to provide for the development of the child in: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers and which causes, or has high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as feasible (WHO 1999).

Emotional abuse: includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can reach their full potential in the context of the society in which the child lives. There may also be acts toward the child that cause or have a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. These acts must be reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Acts include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, scape-goating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing, or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment (WHO, 1999).

3. Volunteer Code of Conduct: Guidelines for protecting our children

By agreeing to the following code of conduct, you will ensure that our children at Aishworya are protected from all potential abuse and exploitation.

- As a volunteer at Aishworya, you must not engage in any: physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, or neglect/negligent treatment as defined in section 2.
- Like all children, the children at Aishworya are very impressionable. Do not use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive. Do not condone or participate in behaviour towards children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive, or exposes the child to danger. Please lead by example in everything that you do.
- Do not do anything with intent to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade the children.
- Please leave discipline to the staff at Aishworya. If you notice any of our children behaving badly, please report it directly to a staff member for them to handle.
- It is important that you do not discriminate against, show differential treatment to, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others. We understand that it is hard not to have a 'favourite' child sometimes, but please try your best to treat all of the children equally.
- If you would like to give the children gifts, you must consult the staff at Aishworya first. Please do not give gifts directly to a child. This is especially important in regard to cash/money. Volunteers should **never** give money directly to a child, as this can result in a number of very difficult problems, both for the staff and for the other children.
- Our children are very affectionate and enjoy affection being shown to them and we encourage it. However, you must not touch, kiss or cuddle a child inappropriately and all touching should be open and non-secretive. You must not behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative towards a child. Do not spend excessive time alone with a child away from others.
- Do not invite children into your private room. The children will not enter volunteer rooms without permission, and we encourage you to keep that room as your personal and private space.
- Do not take any children outside of the orphanage premises without prior consultation/permission from a staff member.
- Do not drink alcohol on the premises, or return to the orphanage in an inebriated/drunken state.
- Although our children are extremely well-behaved and trustworthy, we recommend that you do not keep large quantities of cash or valuables in your room. If you do need to store a large amount of money or valuable items for any reason, please inform Nirmala Ghimire (Director) or Pramila Ghimire (Assistant Director), who can help you to store it safely.
- If you become aware of any instances where you believe that abuse or exploitation has occurred, or if you think any of the above rules have been broken – either by volunteers, visitors, or staff members, you must report this directly to our staff – Nirmala Ghimire (Director), Pramila Ghimire (Assistant Director) or Tej Ghimire (Pramila's husband, Community Police Officer).

Please sign here to confirm that you have read and understood these guidelines, and agree to adhere to this code of conduct.

Signature:

Date: