

BURMEASE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COLLABORATION GENERAL POLICY: CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

APPLICATION	Organization wide
RESPONSIBILITY	Board, Management, Staff
DISTRIBUTION	Board, Management, Staff
REVIEW DATE	2 yearly

Introduction

Burmese Community Development Collaboration (BCDC) is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Everyone working at BCDC is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

Purpose

The policy aims to provide guidance on how to respond to concerns and allegations of child abuse. It provides guidance to staff and associates on how to work respectfully and effectively with children. This will provide all stakeholders, including staff and associates with a safe working environment.

Scope

This policy applies to all BCDC employees, volunteers, partners, and associates

Definitions

Child means a person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Child protection is the term used to describe the responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or stop children being abused or maltreated.

Child safeguarding means actions, policies and procedures that create and maintain protective environments for children including to protect them from exploitation and abuse of all kinds.

Child abuse is abuse happens to male and female children of all ages, ethnicity and social backgrounds, abilities, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, and political persuasion. Child abuse includes physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, bullying, child labour and family violence. Abuse can be inflicted on a child by both men and women, as well as by young

people themselves and in some cases; professionals and other adults working with children in a position of trust also abuse children.

Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child. 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 occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats. This may involve name calling, being put down or continual coldness from parent or care giver; to the extent that it affects the child's physical and emotional growth.

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by an older or bigger child, adolescent, or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification - regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. These can be contact or noncontact acts, including sexualized language, voyeurism, fondling genitals or breasts, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object and exposing a child to, or involving a child in pornography.

Exploitation means commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others that are to the detriment of the child's physical and mental health, education, or moral and social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labor, child trafficking and child sexual exploitation

Guiding Principles

BCDC believes that all children have the right to be safe at all times. We will proactively work to provide safe and protective programs, activities, and environments.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between the BCDC, all employees, workers, contractors, associates, and members of the BCDC community.

BCDC supports and respects all children, staff, and volunteers. BCDC is committed to the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

Code of Conduct

Staff members and associates are responsible for maintaining a professional role with children, which means establishing and maintaining clear professional boundaries that serve to protect everyone from misunderstandings or a violation of the professional relationship. All staff should conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their role as an BCDC representative and a positive role model to children.

BCDC has developed this Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct to protect children, staff, and the organization by providing clear behavioral guidelines and expectations, they are:

I WILL:

- Conduct myself in a manner that is consistent the values of BCDC
- Provide a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment for all children.
- Respect all children and treat them equally regardless of gender, race, religious or political beliefs, age, physical or mental health, sexual orientation, family and social background and culture, economic status, or criminal background.
- Encourage open communication between all children, parents, staff, and volunteers and have children participate in the decisions that affect them.
- Immediately report any concerns of child abuse or breach of the Child Safeguarding Policy or this Code of Conduct according to the guidelines outlined in the Child Safeguarding Policy.
- Immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence that relates to child exploitation and abuse, including those under traditional law, which occurred before, or during my association with BCDC.
- Take responsibility for ensuring that I am accountable and do not place myself in positions where there is a risk of allegations being made.
- Self-assess my behaviours, actions, language, and relationships with children.
- Comply with all relevant Australian and overseas child protection legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour
- Consult with the Child Protection Advisor /Focal Point or other relevant staff if I have any questions regarding child protection and how it relates to my work/relationship with BCDC
- Comply with the BCDC Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Whenever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working near children.
- Be a positive role model for children

I WILL NOT:

- Engage in behaviour that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle, degrade, or exploit children.
- Use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, discriminatory, demeaning or culturally inappropriate
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for him/herself, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes.
- Invite unaccompanied children into my home/hotel or other private location, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
- Sleep in the same room or bed as a child.
- Smack, hit or physically assault or physically punish children.
- Involve children in sexual relationships or any form of sexual activity, including paying for sexual services
- Develop relationships with children that may be deemed exploitative or abusive
- Not give or provide children with alcohol or illegal drugs;
- Not show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention; Behave provocatively or inappropriately with a child.
- Condone or participate in, behaviour of children that is illegal, unsafe, or abusive.
- Act in a way that shows unfair and differential treatment of children.
- Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate, unnecessary, or culturally insensitive way.
- Seek to make contact and spend time with any child or young person outside the program times.
- Use any computers, mobile phones, video and digital cameras, or social media inappropriately, nor use them for the purpose of exploiting or harassing children.
- Hire minors for domestic or other labour.

WHEN PHOTOGRAPHING OR FILMING A CHILD, OR USING CHILDREN'S IMAGES FOR WORK-RELATED PURPOSES, I WILL:

- Obtain informed and documented consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians before photography/filming.
- Provide an explanation on how the photograph/film will be used
- Ensure photographs, films, videos, and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive.
- Images are honest representations of the context and facts

- Ensure file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form
- Take care to ensure the local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images are adhered to before photographing or filming a child.

Risk Assessment

BCDC will ensure that child safety is a part of its overall risk management approach. Staff and associates (as relevant) are trained in child safeguarding and risk assessment. They are expected to be continually aware of potential risks to children as well as to be actively minimizing opportunities and situations where children can be harmed.

Personnel Recruitment and Selection

BCDC undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all workers and volunteers that aim to:

- promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation;
- identify the safest and most suitable people who share BCDC's values and commitment to protect children; and
- prevent a person from working at BCDC if they pose a risk to children.

BCDC requires all workers/volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with BCDC.

BCDC may require applicants to provide a police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate before they commence working at BCDC and during their time with BCDC at regular intervals.

BCDC will undertake thorough reference checks as per the approved internal procedure.

Once engaged, workers/volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this Policy.

Responding to and Reporting Child Protection Concerns

It is mandatory for all BCDC personnel and associates to report any witnessed, suspected, or alleged incidents of child exploitation or abuse or any breach of the Child Safeguarding Policy and/or Code of Conduct.

Who should report? - All BCDC staff and associates including people in the community and partner organizations.

What should be reported? - Any disclosure, concern or allegation from a child, community member, staff or associate regarding the safety, abuse, or exploitation of a child (this includes actual, suspected, or risk of abuse or harm to a child)

When to report? - Child abuse concerns should be raised immediately.

Who to report to? – Child abuse reports should be made to the CPO or the CEO.

How it should be reported? – Verbal or written

What will happen next? - The CEO in consultation the CPO will discuss the allegations and then decide upon the next step. This will involve one or more of the following:

- Interviewing the person/persons who made the allegations and/or other witnesses to gather more information with which to make a decision about the allegation;
- Reporting to local police and or child protection authority when it is suspected or becomes clear that a crime has been committed;
- Reporting to the Australian Federal Police when it is suspected or becomes clear that a crime has been committed regarding child sex tourism, child sex trafficking and child pornography
- Reporting to local child protection services as necessary
- Handling the concern internally if it is not a criminal matter
- No further action taken
- Providing support to all stakeholders as necessary

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a key principle of reporting and managing child protection concerns. All information regarding a child protection concern must only be shared with the designated Manager or CPO. The names of people involved, and the details of the report will remain confidential. Information will only be released on a “need to know” basis or when required by Australian or overseas law or when a report to police or child protection authorities is made.

Disciplinary Action

Disciplinary action will be taken against any personnel or associate found to:

- Have failed to report a child protection concern
- Have intentionally made a false allegation
- Have made a serious breach of the Child Safeguarding Policy and/or Code of Conduct (minor breaches may result in action such as refresher training or increased supervision)

Disciplinary action may include the following sanctions:

- BCDC personnel – disciplinary action / dismissal
- BCDC associates – up to and including termination of all relations including contractual and partnership agreements with BCDC
- Where relevant – reporting to authorities