

SECS Code of Conduct in relation with children

Revised and approved in May 2020

Introduction

SECS believes in and advocates children's rights to survival, protection, development and participation. This Code of Conduct includes guidance on appropriate and expected standards of behavior of adults towards children and also of children towards other children. It has been developed with the best interests of the child as the primary consideration and should be interpreted in a spirit of transparency and common sense.

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgment about the appropriate action to take.

In line with its vision and values, SECS is committed to maintaining the highest level of ethical behavior among volunteers, counselors and staff.

Appropriate Standards of Behavior

Adults **should**:

- Treat all people with dignity and respect.
- When working in an international context or travelling internationally on behalf of SECS, be observant of all local laws and be sensitive to local customs.
- Provide an enabling environment for children's personal, physical, social, emotional, moral and intellectual development.
- Encourage and respect children's voices and views.
- Be inclusive and involve all children without selection or exclusion on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, religion or any other status.
- Be aware of the potential for peer abuse (e.g. children bullying, discriminating against, victimizing or abusing children).
- Develop special measures/supervision to protect younger and especially vulnerable children from peer and adult abuse.
- Be aware of high-risk peer situations (e.g. unsupervised mixing of older and younger children and possibilities of discrimination against minors).
- Develop clear rules to address specific physical safety issues relative to the local physical environment of a project (e.g. for projects based near water, heavy road traffic, railway lines).
- Being an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.

- Recognizing the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults - avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act *in loco parentis*, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Requesting written parental consent if adult volunteers or staff are required to transport young people in their cars.
- Avoid placing yourself in a compromising or vulnerable position when meeting with children (e.g. being alone with a child in any circumstances which might potentially be questioned by others).
- Meet with a child in a central, public location whenever possible.
- Immediately report the circumstances of any situation which occurs which may be subject to misinterpretation to the designated Child Protection Officer.
- Report suspected or alleged abuse to the designated Child Protection Officer.

Inappropriate Standards of Behavior

Adults **should not**:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault a child.
- Use language that will mentally or emotionally abuse any child.
- Act in any way that intends to embarrass shame, humiliate or degrade a child.
- Show discrimination of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, political persuasion or any other status.
- Develop a sexual relationship with a child.
- Kiss, hug, fondle, rub or touch a child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child could do for him/herself, including dressing, bathing and grooming.
- Encourage any crushes by a child.
- Initiate physical contact (e.g. holding hands) unless initiated by the child.
- Suggest inappropriate behavior or relations of any kind.
- Allow children to engage in sexually provocative games with each other.
- Stand aside when they see inappropriate actions inflicted by children on other children because it is frequent and commonplace.
- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- share a room with a child
- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun

- reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child
- do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults, that they can do for themselves
- invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

N.B. It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the players involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the appropriate officer and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- if you accidentally hurt a child involved in an activity
- if a child participating in the activity misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.
- SECS volunteers, trustees and staff as defined in paragraph 9 above are obligated to bring to the attention of the supervisor any potential incident, abuse or concern that they witness, are made aware of, or suspect, which appears to breach the standards contained in this Code.
- If the volunteer, trustee or staff member does not feel comfortable reporting to their supervisor they can use IPPF SafeReport, IPPF's external incident reporting service.
- Supervisors receiving reports or concerns, are obliged to refer the report immediately to the relevant incident reporting mechanism.