

Child Safety Policy Document

CHILDREN FIRST ASSOCIATION



DIYARBAKIR, 2024

INTRODUCTION

1. Definitions - Reference to International Law

Child protection policy is based on the best interests of the child. However, from ancient times to the recent past, the place, status or existence of the child has not been sufficiently discussed. “In antiquity, when children served the purposes of being good citizens, security in interstate treaties and a part of kinship relations, childhood was a concept that did not receive enough attention” (Karakuş Öztürk, 2017, p.255). In this period, children were considered as “little citizens” who needed to be educated within the laws and culture of society. In the Middle Ages, the foundation of the family institution was based on the ideology of slavery, and the family was a community consisting of a father's slaves and children. In this community, the father has every right over the child and children have no special status or rights that provide them with protection (Uğur: 2018).

With the Renaissance, which enabled the discovery of the value of the individual, the meanings attributed to childhood began to change. The view that the child is an “innocent being” who is separated from adult life and expected to reach adult life is adopted and childhood begins to be seen as a separate life stage from adulthood (Demir Gürdal, 2013). However, these developments are not sufficient for the full protection of the child.

Pursuant to Article 6/1-c of the Turkish Criminal Code (TCK) no. 5237, a person under the age of 18 is defined as a child (Turkish Criminal Code, Official Gazette, no. 25611, October 12, 2004). Pursuant to Article 3/1-a of the Child Protection Law No. 5395 (Child Protection Law, Official Gazette, 25876, July 15, 2005), a person who has not attained the age of 18 is a child, even if he/she attains puberty at an earlier age. According to the aforementioned provisions, every person who has not attained the age of eighteen is defined as a child, even if he/she is legalized before the age of eighteen.

1.1. Child Labor

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines child labor as work that often deprives children of their childhood, diminishes their potential and dignity, and is harmful to their physical and mental development. child labor enslaves children, separates them from their families, exposes them to serious dangers and diseases, and leaves them to fend for themselves on the streets of big cities at a very young age.

According to the ICHILD “What is Child Labor?” Report (2021), one of the examples of why children need to be protected around the world. Report (2021), which is one of the examples of why children need to be protected around the world, defines the worst forms of child labor as the use of children in illegal activities such as the production of pornographic content or the production of narcotics in exchange for trade and commercial debt, and work that is harmful to children's health, safety and development. According to Turkish Labor Legislation, it is forbidden to employ children under the age of 15. Children over 15 years of age can work in a way that allows them to continue their mental, physical, social and moral development and education.

Child labor causes a number of physiological, psychological and social problems in children. They face risks regardless of the sector and working conditions. Since their work and working environments are not suitable for their age and developmental level, they are physiologically and psychologically threatening. Children's health deteriorates when exposed to hazardous substances, poor ventilation and chemicals. Conditions such as slippery floors, unprotected stairs, inadequate lighting cause children to feel unsafe in work environments.

1.2. Child Neglect and Abuse

Child Abuse and Neglect The World Health Organization defines maltreatment in four ways: physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect (WHO Report, 1999: 13-17). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Protection Law guarantee the prevention of abuse behaviors such as physical force intentionally used against children, dragging them into sexual behavior for which they are not ready in terms of developmental level, threatening, intimidating and humiliating them.

Child abuse is any form of physical and/or emotional maltreatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, or commercial or other exploitation that causes actual or potential harm to the health, life, development or dignity of the child in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power (WHO Report, 2006). On the other hand, it is considered neglect if the persons and/or institutions responsible for the care of the child do not provide access to the rights that the child should have access to, such as health, education, nutrition, shelter and play. Laws and international conventions are responsible for producing policies to protect children from the risk of neglect and abuse, and to impose sanctions when it occurs.

1.3. Violence Against Children

Violence against children, by definition, is any form of abuse and ill-treatment, including physical or mental assault, violence or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, rape (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19). All children in the world, regardless of language, religion, belief, skin color, lifestyle and culture, have the right to protection, to live and develop in a healthy way and to participate in decisions. Violence against children can cause physical, social and psychological damage to children. Children should be kept away from physical, sexual, economic and emotional violence and protected from all forms of maltreatment. Measures should be taken to prevent children from being subjected to violence and indirectly affected by it.

1.4. Child Protection

Preventive, protective and supportive mechanisms need to be developed to protect children from all forms of violence, neglect and abuse. Postman states that childhood is a unique developmental period and children need special protection and support (Postman, 1983). Articles 16 and 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child state that “No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unjustified interference with his or her private life, family, home and communication, nor shall his or her honor and reputation be unjustly attacked. The child has the right to be protected by law against such interference and attacks.” It is the duty of the family/caregivers, society and the state to protect the child.

Child Protection basically covers 4 points;

- Protecting the child from all kinds of risks that may cause harm,
- Prioritizing the best interests of the child,
- Taking into account the uniqueness of the child,
- Observing child participation.

Notification is mandatory in cases of violence against children and failure to protect the child. The obligation to notify is regulated under Articles 98, 279 and 280 of the Turkish Criminal Code; Article 6 of the Child Protection Law and Article 21 of the Social Services Law.

1.5. Child Participation

The Convention on the Rights of the Child consists of 54 articles. Articles 1 through 41 are rights articles. These articles talk about the fundamental rights of children. Articles 42

through 54 provide guidance on how States Parties should implement the Convention. Children's right to participate is protected by law. Contributions of participation to the child;

- Learns the concept of democracy.
- Respects different cultures and different ideas.
- Takes responsibility.
- Gains confidence.
- Finds solutions to problems.
- Empathizes and looks from a wide perspective.

Child participation means that children can freely express their opinions and that their views are taken into account. Children should be able to participate directly in decision-making mechanisms, production and criticism on issues that concern them. For meaningful participation of children in these mechanisms, “there should be no age limit, they should be transparent and informative, they should be free from risks, the child should voluntarily participate in the activities, there should be no discrimination and the processes should be child-friendly” (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009:12).

Child participation is essential for children to express their opinions and receive feedback on issues of interest to them. The most important indicator of child participation is healthy feedback. It is possible to talk about full participation by implementing the decisions of the child with the feedback provided.

1.6. Child Safety

Child safety is the protection of children from violence, exploitation and abuse. In addition, the physical environment in which the child lives should be safe for the child. Safety precautions should be taken such as ensuring that floors are not slippery, that there are no chemical materials in the environment, that sinks and hygiene products are installed at easily accessible points, and that they are kept away from cutting, piercing and flammable materials. All environments where children may be present should be designed to be child-friendly. All activities for children should be inclusive and designed to meet the needs of all children.

Children feel safe and participate more actively in life when they do not have to worry about being abused and when they are heard and supported. Child safety should be ensured in all institutions such as schools, families, community centers, local governments, government

offices and non-governmental organizations. The family, the state and the whole society are responsible for child safety.

To ensure child safety in institutions;

- The organization raises awareness on child protection, child safety, child participation and has a detailed and flexible Child Protection Policy
- Ensure that spaces are safe enough for children and revise them in a way that puts the child's safety at the center
- The association's staff, board of directors, members, volunteers and all those who may come into contact with children have a child protection perspective and sign the code of conduct document
- The organization needs to have a focal person, complaint, reporting and response mechanism.

1.7. Child Well-being

When we look at the modern paradigm of childhood, it is seen that the child is not an object that needs to be protected, but subjective. In other words, it is thought that the child is not the property of the family or society/state. Furthermore, children have protection needs and it is thought that these needs should be met by adults with help and cooperation. This responsibility is broadly divided between the state and the child's family. This assumption, which is also recognized in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), is based on the premise that children are individuals with rights like adults and that they have certain characteristics that are different from adults.

2. Principles

- The best interests of the child are respected.
- Have a say in decisions that affect their lives.
- Have equal access to all activities regardless of gender, race, origin and age.
- Asking families about the procedures to be determined on the applicability of the policy.
- Accountability and responsibility for measures to be taken for children at risk or in difficult situations.

- Ensure that private or legal persons working with our organization recognize child protection risks and prevent potential risks.
- To maintain an honest and transparent working method by informing the private or legal persons we work with - including children - about our child protection policy.
- To ensure the protection and confidentiality of personal data.
- To receive support from experts and institutions and organizations where necessary.
- Monitoring the applicability of the Child Protection Policy and creating a revised Child Protection Policy when necessary.

3. Policies

- Children First Association, an association that works directly with children, considers the well-being of the child in every activity it carries out.
- It takes the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a basis for its activities and takes into account the 4 basic principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life and development and the right to participation.
- When working with children, the organization makes spatial arrangements to ensure the safety of children and for child-friendly activities.
- Under no circumstances does it accept violence both inside and outside the organization.
- It produces child-sensitive policies and does not store or disseminate any information of the child within the scope of KVKK. Even with the permission of the child, no photographs or videos are taken, and when necessary, they are not shared without the permission of the guardian.
- Children First Association creates accessible application and support mechanisms for every child.
- By taking part in the Child Crisis Network, which includes other children's associations in Diyarbakır, the association accelerates and facilitates communication and support in emergencies.
- In emergencies, counseling is provided and focal persons are available for proper intervention.

- It maintains a risk report in order to ensure the safety of children in cases such as fire, earthquake and floods.
- The Association's Child Safety, Protection and Participation Document is an inclusive and holistic policy text for all children.

4. Scope

Children First Association employees, volunteers, experts, mentors, workshop facilitators, and other persons and institutions that come into direct or indirect contact with children, from whom we receive services and with whom we establish solidarity, are responsible for knowing and implementing the procedures in this document. Children First Association organizes its activities in child-safe spaces. Before workshops and meetings, all risks that the area may pose are evaluated and the area is organized in such a way that possible risks are minimized. The social media accounts of the association are shared in a way that the child is not clearly visible or personal information is not shared.

5. Protection and Prevention Procedures

5.1. Responsibility

The focal person should be responsible for children's safety and be accessible. The Association's employees, volunteers and service providers are responsible for complying with the policy text. The Board of Directors is responsible for reporting any failure to implement the Child Protection, Participation and Safety Policy.

5.2. Focus/Focal Person

As an organization that both works for children and directly works with children, Children First Association has a focal person in every project where children can feel safe, get help or be guided on any issue.

5.3. Recruitment

Children First Association is sensitive to the fact that the personnel it employs have a child protection and gender equality perspective. In addition, in all its service procurements, it pays attention to the fact that institutions and individuals have the same perspective, have knowledge and experience in the field of child protection, and do not use discriminatory, speciesist and sexist language. The Association requires that the persons and organizations that

it hires and/or procures services from commit to comply with the Code of Conduct of the Children First Association as set out in Annex 1.

5.4. Procurement Policy

Children First Association does not work with any organization or person associated with child neglect and abuse, and does not purchase products and services.

5.5. Protection of Information about Children

As an organization working for and directly with children, the personal data and images of children in our work, activities and workshops will be stored by the association and will not be accessible to other persons, institutions and organizations. Even with the consent of the child, the consent of both the child and his/her legal guardian will be obtained with the Informed Consent Form for the sharing of photos and videos on the social media accounts of the Children First Association so that the child's face is not visible.

6. Communication and Visibility

Children First Association has an e-mail address, social media accounts and corporate GSM number that can be reached within one full day and one half day at the latest for support, solidarity and cooperation. There is an open address on the website. Children First Association is a non-profit organization. Fundraising activities such as fund application, fundraising and sponsorship are carried out for the sustainability of the association. While carrying out these activities, it can ensure the visibility of the organizations it cooperates with and receives sponsorship from. Children First Association does not cooperate or partner with people who are associated with violence, neglect and abuse and who do not have a child protection perspective; therefore, it does not ensure the visibility of these individuals, institutions and organizations.

7. Notification Mechanism

Considering the best interests of the child, preventing all forms of violence, neglect and abuse against children can be ensured by raising awareness of children's rights in society and making them visible. Here, it is necessary to keep children away from violence and to mobilize the reporting mechanism so that they know and use their rights. The staff, volunteers and board members of Children First Association have a Child Rights perspective. However, in case of behavior against the rights of the child, a written or verbal notification can be made to the disciplinary board of Children First Association. Children or their caregivers report any

injustice, neglect or discrimination they experience during the activity to the association management. If they do not feel safe enough in this regard, they can use the e-mail address info@oncecocuklar.org.tr as a channel.

Legal Processes: According to Article 278 of the Turkish Penal Code, everyone has the obligation to report a crime. According to Article 279 of the same law, if a public official fails to report a crime, he/she is punished with imprisonment from 6 months to 2 years, and according to Article 280, if a health official fails to report a crime, he/she is punished with imprisonment up to 1 year. Reporting violence is not an accusation, so there is no need to have evidence to report; it is enough to have suspicion or the child mentions violence. Reporting is a request for the assessment, investigation and determination of the child's situation and for the protection of the child. Information that may be requested during the reporting process;

- 1) The child's identity and place of residence
- 2) Name of the suspect, degree of closeness to the child and identification information, if any
- 3) What is the situation that makes you suspect violence
- 4) You will be asked for your name and identifying information (anonymity may be requested if there are safety concerns).

What to do if you witness violence while working or in contact with children, if violence is suspected or if the child mentions it;

- If he/she works in an institution, he/she can report it to the institutional authority.
- If an NGO worker, if it is against the best interest of the child or if the source of the violence is not the relevant persons, the parents, caregivers or teachers should be informed.
- The incident should not be explained in detail to the child. With the report, the issue will be explained in detail by the child to the institutions/professionals involved in the protection system. The child should be told once to prevent the child from being traumatized.

- Places to contact for reporting and notification; Law Enforcement / Police Stations - Child Police - Gendarmerie Child Protection Center, ALO 155 Police Emergency Hotline and ALO 156 Gendarmerie Hotline Public Prosecutor's Office Juvenile Court / Civil Courts of First Instance in places where there is no Juvenile Court Bar Associations / if any, the Child Rights Center of the Bar Association or Child Rights Commission Family, Provincial Directorates, District Directorates, Social Service Centers of the Ministry of Labor and Social Services or

ALO 183 Family, Women, Children and Disabled Social Service Hotline Child Protection Units of Universities or Child Protection Centers Domestic Violence Emergency Hotline 0 212 6569696 / 0549 656 96 96 96 Alo Child Support and Abuse Hotline 0 216 450 54 54

8. REFERENCES

Connections

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10. Hayata Destek Derneği, *Çocuk Güvenliği Uygulama Rehberi*, 2023
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9. ANNEX DOCUMENTS

9.1. Code of Conduct

ALWAYS

- Children First Association is transparent, flexible and open to everyone's access and review, except in cases where the fundamental rights of individuals, institutions or organizations need to be protected.
- The information of everyone who participates in the activities of Children First Association online or face-to-face is securely stored within the scope of KVKK.
- Children First Association has adopted the principle of being accountable to its funders, financial supporters, sponsors, all the institutions it cooperates with and supports, and the society.
- Children First Association's relations with all persons, institutions and organizations it is in contact with and partners with are based on honesty. It is impartial in all kinds of disputes other than bribery, corruption and/or illegal attitudes and behaviors that may occur in these relations.
- In every situation, taking into account the different characteristics of children, it makes plans and organizes the environment in accordance with their needs.
- Children First Association employees, members, and association management respect children's private spaces, boundaries and right to speak.
- Removes items and objects around children that may cause harm, and ensures that children are safe.
- Allows children to say “no” at all times and takes their opinions into consideration.
- When he/she learns that children are exposed to violence during or after the work, he/she reports this situation via info@oncecocuklar.org.tr e-mail address.

NEVER

- Children First Association, as an organization that both works directly with children and for children, is non-profit and seeks resources in line with needs.
- Children First Association does not determine attitudes based on people's beliefs, languages, cultures, is inclusive, and does not discriminate.
- Within the scope of the procurement policy of Children First Association, it does not cooperate with any person, institution or organization that is associated with violence, neglect and abuse, does not purchase products and services, and does not establish partnerships.
- It protects the personal belongings of children upon their request and does not interfere with these items in any way without the permission and knowledge of the children, and does not share them with others.
- No one associated with Children First Association establishes a romantic or sexual relationship with anyone over the age of 18, knowing that this is abuse and that there can be no excuse for it.
- They do not kiss or hug children if they do not want to; they do not build consent.
- Does not engage in any behavior that may endanger the child and/or his/her family.
- If it is not necessary for the work carried out, they do not take photographs, videos and audio recordings, and no information and images of children are kept in anyone's personal vehicles other than the storage areas of the association.
- Does not lie to or manipulate children.
- It does not establish a relationship with children other than a professional relationship.
- In the light of the Child Protection, Participation and Safety Policy, Code of Conduct Policy, Anti-Discrimination Policy and Gender Equality Attitude Document, Children First Association does not condone, ignore or fail to report violations of the aforementioned texts by all persons, institutions and organizations associated with the association.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Who We Are?

Children First Association was established in Diyarbakır in 2017 with the aim of working for the psycho-social, cultural-artistic development and linguistic, mental and physical development of children within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to support people and organizations working on this issue. The association aims to develop projects on different themes and topics in the field of culture and arts, to produce with the participation and leadership of children, and to make these productions available to as many children as possible through visual media platforms. The association has four main areas of work:

Productions

In order to realize its objectives, the Association develops projects on various themes and produces productions for children. These productions include animated films, public service announcements and television programs. The Association also aims to publish written materials such as illustrated and audio storybooks for children.

Research-Study

The Association conducts research on issues related to its goals and objectives and shares its data with the public in formats such as reports and documentaries.

Education Activities

The Association organizes workshops for children, primarily on the themes mentioned above. In these workshops, children benefit from work on different themes through their mother tongue. They develop themselves in these fields and acquire the knowledge and experience to produce. Talented children who wish to continue their education in these fields are supported.

Corporate Events

The Association organizes events such as symposiums, conferences, panels, workshops and seminars for children, parents, teachers and other professionals working with children.

Why do we need to develop a child protection policy?

Child protection policies aim to protect children from abuse, neglect and maltreatment. They emphasize society's responsibility towards children, provide a safe environment and promote

the healthy development of children. They also protect children's rights and establish early intervention and support mechanisms. The aim of these policies is to ensure the best interests of the child, the right to life and development, non-discrimination and participation of the child in matters concerning him/her, and to provide a safe environment by protecting the child from potential dangers, based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The policy text is essential to transform our practices that may be risky in terms of child safety, to evaluate and perpetuate our discourses according to this perspective by putting children's rights at the center. This text is an evolving text. It is designed to be flexible and open to feedback.

Which Problems Do We Expect the Policy to Solve?

The Child Protection, Participation and Safety Policy Document aims to raise awareness of children's rights among children and adults working with children, to help strengthen children's ability to have a say in matters that concern them, and to strengthen other organizations working on children's rights. The dissemination of policy documents can prevent violations of rights that may occur by children learning about their rights. It can help children to actively participate in decision-making mechanisms instead of staying in the background on issues that concern them.