

Firelight Newsflash! 7 April 2008 - Codes of Conduct

Do you have a code of conduct in place in your organization?

A code of conduct is a set of rules outlining the responsibilities of proper practices for an individual or organization. A working definition of a code of conduct follows: **"Principles, values, standards, or rules of behavior that guide the decisions, procedures and systems of an organization in a way that (a) contributes to the welfare of its key stakeholders, and (b) respects the rights of all constituents affected by its operations."**

When working with vulnerable children, it is especially important that organizations take **proactive steps** to prevent children from being abused or exploited. Codes of conduct help to set expectations for new and existing staff and volunteers, to define any conduct or wrongdoing that may bring your organization into disrepute. Codes of conduct can also provide a basis for disciplinary action and/or legal measures if problems with a staff or volunteer's behaviour are uncovered.

As part of upholding our mission and values, the Firelight Foundation encourages our partners to **strongly condemn** all kinds of child abuse and sexual exploitation and to ensure that your own organization's policies and practices reflect this.

Attached, please find an example of a code of conduct which can be utilized if you don't already have one in place for your staff or volunteers. Of course you should adapt it to correspond to the legal and social conditions of your local situation. Also attached is UNICEF's training program on prevention/response to sexual abuse and exploitation in humanitarian assistance programs that you may find useful.

Our best,
The Firelight Team

Staff's/Volunteer's Code of Conduct

Adults who work with children or young adults through _____ (*insert org. name*) have the legal and moral responsibility to perform their duties in a way that assists -- and does not harm -- the children, youth and vulnerable adults with whom they work. As a staff person/ volunteer, I promise to follow the rules and guidelines in this Code of Conduct as a condition of my providing services to the children, youth and/or vulnerable adults of _____ (*insert location or catchment area*).

As a staff person/volunteer, I will:

- Treat everyone I serve with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition, or comparison when working with children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- Maintain confidentiality in all matters related to normal business.
- Report any suspected cases of child abuse to the relevant authorities. I understand that failure to report suspected child abuse to civil authorities is against the law.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children, youth or vulnerable adults.

As a staff person/volunteer, I will *not*:

- Touch or speak to a child, youth or vulnerable adult in a sexual, abusive, or other inappropriate manner.
- Strike, spank, shake, or slap children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- Ridicule, threaten, or degrade children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- Accept or give gifts to children, youth, or vulnerable adults without the knowledge of their parents or guardians.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of tobacco products, alcohol, or illegal drugs at any time while engaging in activities with children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- Use, possess, or show pornographic materials to children, youth, or vulnerable adults at any time.
- Use profanity in the presence of children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- I understand that as a staff/volunteer working with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults, I am subject to a thorough background check including my criminal history.

My signature confirms that I have carefully read this Code of Conduct and have discussed its content with _____ (*insert org. name*) my supervisor in order to understand it clearly. As a staff/volunteer working with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults, I am aware that _____ (*insert org. name*) expects me to uphold the standards of behavior described in the Code of Conduct above at all times. I agree to follow these standards and I understand that any action inconsistent with this Code of Conduct may result in my removal as a staff/volunteer and/or appropriate legal measures.

Staff/Volunteer's Printed Name

Date

Staff/Volunteer's Signature

Supervisor's Signature