



Indigenous Education Foundation Limited (IEF) **Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons Policy**

1. INTRODUCTION:

Indigenous Education Foundation (IEF) is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all vulnerable persons associated with IEF and in-country programs and recognises its responsibility to promote safe environments to protect vulnerable persons from abuse and exploitation.

This Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons Policy applies to all personnel (Australia and overseas), Australian volunteers, contractors, in-country program personnel, IEF board members and associates of IEF.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

IEF recognises that vulnerable persons are at risk from physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect, and recognises its obligations to minimise these risks for all persons. For the purposes of this policy, vulnerable persons are any individuals or groups who or are of Indigenous descent, under the age of 18, or 18 and above and unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation.

Vulnerable persons may be at risk of one or more types of abuse including physical abuse or neglect, or emotional abuse, sexual abuse and financial abuse or exploitation.

- **Emotional abuse** of a vulnerable person is any act which may lessen the sense of identity, dignity or self-worth of a person, such as: confinement; physical and social isolation; verbal assault, harassment, humiliation, or intimidation; denial of information, privacy, visitors; coercion.
- **Sexual abuse** of a vulnerable person is any act involving unwanted touching/activity of a sexual nature, or a situation in which an adult consents or submits to sexual activity because a person in a position of trust or with

authority has used that trust/authority to gain that consent. Such acts include: sexual assault, sexual harassment, any act designed to use the vulnerable person for the perpetrator's sexual gratification.

- **Financial abuse or exploitation** is any act involving the misuse or abuse of funds or assets belonging to a vulnerable person. Examples include obtaining property and funds without the person's knowledge or consent, or by using undue influence; or where a person is not mentally competent, or not acting in the person's best interest.

Alleged, suspected or witnessed abuse of a vulnerable person may constitute a criminal offence and the police should be informed. See section 5. *Reporting suspected abuse of vulnerable persons* for more information.

3. DEFINITIONS

The term vulnerable person abuse is used to describe ways in which vulnerable persons are harmed, usually by adults and often by those they know and trust. There are different types of vulnerable person abuse, and a person may experience more than one kind at any one time in his/her life.

a. What is abuse?

IEF considers that **abuse** is any behaviour towards a person that causes harm, endangers life or violates rights. Within this broad definition of abuse, the following subtypes of abuse are identified:

- (i) Physical abuse;
- (ii) Sexual abuse;
- (iii) Sexual exploitation;
- (iv) Commercial exploitation, including child labour;
- (v) Financial or material – stealing or denying access to money or possessions;
- (vi) Emotional abuse;
- (vii) Neglect and negligent treatment;

(viii) Discrimination – abuse motivated by discriminatory attitudes towards age, race, religion, gender, disability or cultural background; and

(ix) Abuse of trust - where vulnerable adults are indoctrinated with attitudes to social, moral, political, ethical and religious views which are unacceptable to their family and community, or society at large.

4. POLICY

To ensure that all forms of abuse and exploitation are prevented and to help protect people who work with vulnerable persons, IEF is committed to:

- Providing safe environments for all Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and vulnerable persons;
- Identifying any vulnerable person who is suffering, or likely to suffer harm or discrimination;
- Always being publicly open when working with vulnerable persons. Avoiding situations where you and an individual are completely unobserved;
- Respecting the rights, dignity and worth of all persons and treating everyone equally;
- Always giving priority to the health, well-being, and safety of vulnerable persons;
- Ensuring all activities provided and/or undertaken are appropriate to the age, maturity and ability of each person;
- Always promoting the positive aspects of a program or activity and never condoning cheating, rule violations or the use of foul and abusive language;
- Always displaying high standards of personal behaviour;
- Never overtly criticising vulnerable persons or using sarcasm where it may cause the person to lose self-esteem or confidence;
- Always managing expectations appropriately;
- Preventing all forms of abuse, including bullying, discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment), exploitation, vilification and victimisation;
- Reviewing and evaluating implementation of this policy regularly for effectiveness; and
- Providing all necessary training for IEF's Australian-based and in-country personnel with relation to this policy.

IEF Board, Management and Supervisors have additional responsibilities for maintaining a safe environment in all IEF facilities and programs by:

- Ensuring all staff and volunteers working directly with vulnerable persons receive training on this policy;
- Ensuring appropriate screening, including police-check, procedures are implemented during recruitment of staff and volunteers;
- Ensuring all programs are developed with appropriate attention to safeguarding vulnerable persons;
- Responding promptly to any complaints, reports or allegations against IEF or in-country partner staff or volunteers; and
- Contacting police or appropriate services if a member of staff or volunteer suspects that a vulnerable person's safety ... has been compromised.

5. REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OF A VULNERABLE PERSON

Alleged, suspected or witnessed abuse of a vulnerable person may constitute a criminal offence and the police should be informed.

If a staff or volunteer suspects that a vulnerable person's safety is at risk or in immediate danger, contact your supervisor or the local police service by dialing 000.

All incidents reported to supervisors and/or police services by IEF personnel shall be recorded using the IEF Incident Report form. A copy of the incident report shall then be forwarded to your immediate supervisor, IEF Chief Executive or Occupational Health and Safety Officer via admin@iefprograms.org or hr@iefprograms.org.

I, _____, acknowledge that I have read and understood the IEF Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons Policy. I understand that any breach of this Policy may result in the termination of my employment or assignment according to IEF's disciplinary procedures or dismissal/removal from the (_____) program and prosecution by the relevant authorities.

Signature: _____

Name in full: _____

Date of birth: _____

Date: _____

RELATED DOCUMENTS:

- IEF Child Protection Policy
- IEF Code of Conduct
- IEF Injury and Incident reporting policy
- IEF Injury and Incident notification form
- IEF OH&S Policy

RELEVANT RESOURCES:

- The United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)* (2007)
- Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs' *Australian Indigenous Peoples Strategy*
- Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs' *DFAT Indigenous Peoples Strategy 2015-2019: A framework for action*
- The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*
- The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of People with a Disability (CRPD)* (2007)
- Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs: *Development for All 2015-2020: a Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program*

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