**HIMserve**

**Child Protection Policy**

**Organizational Value**

* HIMserve believes that children are important for church and communities, see them developing in all areas of life.
* HIMserve recognizes and respect the uniqueness and potential of each child.
* All the children have right to protection from abuse regardless of race, social background, age, gender, skin color, disability, religion or beliefs.
* All children have right to freedom of speak, explanation and take decision for themselves.
* All children have right to protect from different kind of abuse (physical and mental). When we have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, we shall report it to the appropriate community head and follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken.
* We shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, intimidating, emotionally damaging or physically harmful to children. This policy has precedence over all others.
* HIMserve will not participate in practices that discriminate against children on the basis of their race, ethnicity, religion, sex, national origin, language, abilities or the status or beliefs of their parents.
* All staff should be familiar with signs and symptoms of child abuse, including: physical, sexual, verbal and emotional abuse, and neglect.
* HIMserve staff has to know and follow the law and community procedures that protect children from abuse. We shall respond swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions or allegations of abuse.
* No children under the age of 14, will be used for any type of employment or wage labor in any project.
* HIMserve will talk with other organizations in a case where the child involved requires extra protection.

**Symptoms and Signs of Child Abuse**

**Neglect**

* Poor hygiene, including lice, scabies, untreated diaper rash, body odor.
* Unsuitable clothing; missing key articles of clothing (underwear, socks, shoes); overdressed or underdressed for climate conditions.
* Untreated injury or illness.
* Lack of immunizations.
* Height and weight significantly below age level.
* Unusual school attendance or absenteeism.
* Chronic hunger, tiredness, or lethargy.
* Begging for or collecting leftovers.

**Physical Abuse**

* Unexplained bruises and welts in unusual patterns which suggest the use of an instrument e.g. belt buckle
* Unexplained burns, especially cigarette burns
* Behavioral extremes (withdrawal, aggression, regression, depression).
* Inconsistent explanation for injuries.
* Delay in seeking medical advice.
* Unusual shyness, wariness of physical contact.
* Multiple injuries of different ages

**Emotional Abuse**

* Eating disorders, including obesity or anorexia.
* Speech disorders (stuttering, stammering).
* Weight or height level substantially below norm.
* Habit disorders (biting, rocking, head-banging).
* Cruel behavior, seeming to get pleasure from hurting children, adults or animals.
* Age-inappropriate behaviors (bedwetting, wetting, soiling).

**Sexual Abuse**

* Regressive behaviors (thumb-sucking, bedwetting, fear of the dark).
* Promiscuity or seductive behaviors.
* Unusual and precocious interest in sexual matters.
* Avoidance of undressing or wearing extra layers of clothes

Children abusing other children

**Abuse by children and young people is more common than generally realized.**

Children and young people have always been curious about the opposite sex and/ or experimented sexually. However, where a child is in a position of power and responsibility over another child and abuses that trust through some sexual activity, then this is abuse. Where one child forces themselves on another child of any age this is also abusive. Such situations should be taken as seriously as if an adult were involved and would be investigated in the same way. This is important as the effect on the child victim may be as great, and the perpetrator could himself/ herself be a victim.

Since **abuse is addictive,** it is important to do something to stop that youth in abuse others. You can’t assume the young person will grow out of it.

**Remember:**

* Don’t think that abuse done by young people is ok?
* The effects on the victim can be serious.
* Is she/he going to continue to abuse other?

**Responding to children allegation of abuse (If a child tells you that she/he has been abused)**

* General point-Above everything else, **listen**, listen, listen ! Show acceptance of what the child says, however unlikely it seems, keep calm, Look at the child directly, Be honest.
* Let them know you will need to tell someone else – don’t promise confidentiality. (Because you need to tell leaders above you.)
* **Helpful things you might sa**y or communicate: I believe you (or showing acceptance of what the child says), I am glad you have told me, It’s not your fault, I will help you. Avoiding Saying: Why didn’t you tell before, I can’t believe it, Are you sure this is true? Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.
* **Make notes** as soon as possible (preferably within one hour of the child talking to you), writing down exactly what the child said and when she said it, what you said in reply and what was happening immediately before hand (eg. a description of the activity) Record dates and times of these events and when you made the record.
* Keep all hand written notes; such records should be kept for the counselor.
* The concerned Director should be informed.
* The investigation should take place.
* The child should be separated from the abuser Action should be taken (ex. dismissal of the staff) with consultation of the Director.

**Guidelines (helping the staff to behave and work with the children so we can protect the children from abuse and ourselves from any accusation?)**

* **Staff response while working in the community -** Responding to concerns of physical injury symptoms of neglect or allegations/concerns of sexual abuse by non staff should be share with the director and steps will be taken after discuss with the director of operations where could be refer to Human Rights.
* HIMserve staff, Community Motivator, Partners, Visitors and Donors will not touch a child in a way that is against the Convention on the Rights of the Child. (A general guideline is not to touch children in areas that would normally be covered by shorts and t-shirt, but also includes kissing and tickling in an inappropriate way.)
* Keep everything in public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors. In case of teenager It is preferable that you ask for permission.
* HIMserve Staff, Community Motivator and Visitors must never be alone with children who are not their own offspring (children) in a private place that cannot be seen by other responsible adults. “Two adult rule” this rule states that an adult should not be alone with a child. Even if having an individual conversation with a child, another adult must be within visual contact. This protects both the adult from false accusation and the child from abuse.
* Touch should be related to the child’s needs not the worker’s. Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the worker.
* In a counseling situation with a child where privacy and confidentiality are important, try to make sure that another adult knows the interview is taking place and with whom.
* HIMserve staff and Community Motivator should not engage in any way that is described in as child abuse or to allow or use other children to abuse.
* HIMserve staff, Community Motivator, Visitors & Donors will not visit a child at their own home, while the child is at home alone.
* Adults will always be responsible for their behavior and cannot blame the child, even if the child ‘provokes’ or acts in a ‘seductive’ way. If protocols are broken, the person involved will be disciplined and may lose their job.

***Important note: Information on the child protection policies must be introduced before.***

DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT

To be signed by all HIMerve Staff and Community Motivator. A copy will be kept on file at the HIMserve Office.

**I declare that:**

1. I have read and understood the **HIMserve Child Protection Policy** and I agree to follow it.

2. I understand that if a complaint is brought against me regarding the abuse of children while engaged in HIMserve activities, the allegation will be thoroughly investigated in cooperation with the appropriate authorities and I will suffer the appropriate consequences.

3. I understand that if I am guilty of any offense of physical, emotional or sexual abuse. I will lose the job without any right.

Signature:

Date: