



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Diadema, 28 June 2011.

Alterations to this document may only be made by ACER's management and with the approval of its board of directors.

Recognition

In order to prepare this policy, ACER researched the subject among the following representative sources: the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Brazil, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Universal Declaration of Children's Rights, the state laws on children and young people, the child protection standards of the "Keeping Children Safe Coalition" and JUCONI – 'Together with children' – an organisation similar to ACER located in Mexico.

This Child Protection Policy was developed with the participation of all levels within ACER and should be seen as a work document. Comments and contributions aimed at its improvement are always welcome.

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INTRODUCTION TO ACER'S CHILD¹ PROTECTION POLICY

ACER often works with people who have experienced relationships where their trust has been broken, or who have suffered violence, negligence or abuse². These traumatic experiences are often repeated or attract violent or abusive behaviour in the future. ACER accepts the challenge represented by working with such people and assumes responsibility for ensuring that everything possible will be done to guarantee every child's right to protection.

Although no rule, standard or policy can offer complete child protection, ACER believes that risks can be reduced when these rules, standards and policies are observed.

This policy aims at creating, promoting and maintaining a safe, inclusive, welcoming, non-discriminatory environment, where all children are protected, respected and heard, in a way that encourages them to develop their potential. This aim must be present in the activities and behaviour of ACER's employees, volunteers, sponsors and directors. For this reason, the policy includes, but is not limited to, some aspects of child protection, such as safety, physical injury, sexual abuse, health, using information about the children, administrative procedures and consequences of misconduct.

This Child Protection Policy is an essential part of the struggle to achieve and maintain a safe environment. However, this is just the start. It merely sets out protection methods which must then be understood by everyone, and it will only start to take shape when everyone within the organisation and all those who interact with children through ACER:

- ✓ Are aware that the child's well-being is the priority in every situation;
- ✓ Actively look for training and information on the subject;
- ✓ Regularly receive guidance and training appropriate for their involvement with children in order that they know how to treat them safely and also how to deal with all situations which may compromise or threaten their well-being;
- ✓ Act in accordance with the aims and content of this policy;
- ✓ Add to this policy and the safety practices by giving feedback to their coordinator on how to improve the child's well-being.
- ✓ Whatever their role in ACER - employee, volunteer, intern, adviser, director, sponsor or visitor – commit to observing the procedures and behaviour set out in this document. Equally important is their opinion regarding our child protection policies, procedures and practices, in order to help us ensure that ACER is and remains a recognised safe organisation.

¹ From hereon, everytime the word 'child' appears, read as 'child and young person'

² Abuse is classed as any form of treatment, of whatever nature, which results in real or potencial harm to a child's health, survival, development or dignity.

BACKGROUND TO ACER'S CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Why ACER exists

Children in the Southern Region of Diadema are why ACER exists today.

The ideal behind ACER is to work with children from the region, promoting activities which redeem their dignity, and to guarantee, through the best opportunities and resources, the well-being of children against any form of violence.

Legal basis

ACER's Child Protection Policy is firmly based on the standards of the Human Rights of the United Nations Convention regarding Children's Rights, which acts as a reference for child protection, against any form of discrimination, and ensuring children's survival and development to the greatest extent possible.

The State Law on Children and Young People was also a source of information for this policy. This effectively defines, in article 1, a "child" as a person under the age of 12, and a "young person" as between 12 and 18 years-old.

However, ACER understands that its contribution to the care and development of children takes its legal foundation from the Brazilian Magna Carta, article 227, which reads:

"It is the duty of the family, of society and of the State to ensure, above all else, the right of children and young people to life, to health, to nourishment, to education, to leisure, to a profession, to culture, to dignity, to respect, to liberty and to family and community life, as well as being saved from any form of negligence, discrimination, exploitation, violence, cruelty or oppression.

Moral basis

ACER believes that any organisation which works with children, in any way, has the absolute duty of protecting them. This duty becomes even greater in organisations which work with vulnerable children or those who have already been victims of abuse, maltreatment or exploitation in various ways. This duty is imperative and not negotiable in order to ensure a permanent and lasting environment which is free from abuse.

Putting an end to silence

ACER believes that it is essential to break the vow of silence which often exists in situations of abuse and exploitation among children. Exploiters look out for organisations with poor communication and exploitation thrives in places where taboo, secrecy or shame are prevalent. Furthermore, without the appropriate and explicit policies or procedures, any child protection organisation becomes extremely vulnerable to false allegations of abuse. Therefore, ACER believes in:

- ✓ Promoting open and responsible communication, both internally and externally, and between organisations, in order to improve the understanding and execution of the child protection policies and practices;
- ✓ Creating an environment in which issues of child abuse are discussed and understood in an open and responsible way by children and adults;

- ✓ Creating a system to deal with allegations of abuse in an open, consistent and fair way.

Child participation - a space and a voice

ACER aims to be a space where children are able to and wish to speak without discrimination or shame. ACER believes that it is its duty to lead children to becoming protagonists of their story in order that they might reclaim their rights. This requires giving strength to children so that they too can take an active role in maintaining their safety and in creating around them a network of responsible and caring adults.

Children will only benefit from the Child Protection Policy if they are aware of their rights and if they have the appropriate environment in which to exercise them.

Children and families who have suffered negligence, violence or loss need specific education-therapy to maintain their safety and the safety of others. In all of its activities, ACER uses an educational-therapeutic approach so children and families may overcome their past and create a safe future.

To guarantee the protection of a child taking part in an ACER programme, it is vital that they have on file a copy of their birth certificate, a letter of consent for medical assistance and a letter of consent for the use of photos and voice recordings.

More than just words

The Child Protection Policy sets out guidelines and standards which must be observed. Nevertheless, above all, it must be remembered that the child takes precedence, and that these standards are merely a tool to promote the child's well-being.

With the aim of ensuring the best child protection practices, this document must be updated every time there is an important change in the organisation or in the legislation. With this same aim, it must be revised and discussed at least every two years.

CHAPTER 1

CODE OF CONDUCT AROUND CHILDREN

ACER must act within a policy of non-violence and complete child protection. Below is listed the code of conduct which must be observed by anyone (directors, employees, interns, volunteers, financiers, advisors or visitors) who comes into contact, in whatever way, with children or families with whom ACER works. Obviously, it is impossible to foresee every possible situation. In case of omissions, the child's best interests must always be the priority.

Read carefully the content below. If you have any doubts in fulfilling what is expected of you, express them before joining ACER or speak with your coordinator. These rules are primarily to guarantee the well-being of children within ACER, as well as to protect adults and the organisation from compromising situations. Any infraction can lead to disciplinary measures, which include dismissing employees and occasionally bringing in the relevant authorities.

1.1- Never use any type of violence when dealing with children or adults, regardless of any provocation. This includes reprimanding children³. (3).

1.2 – Always behave calmly, positively, supportively and with encouragement around children.

1.3 – Treat every child with the utmost respect. Avoid any language or action which could be considered insulting, offensive, condescending, embarrassing or humiliating. Never refer to a child as a “street child” (or any similar term).

1.4 - Avoid language or actions which could be sexually provocative, suggestive or which insinuate (or which lead the child to think there was an insinuation of) a sexual relationship. For example, do not kiss, stroke or touch a child in an inappropriate or culturally unacceptable way; do not allow sexually provocative games; do not lie or roll around with children on the floor, bed or sofa. Take care in how you dress so as not to attract children's attention to certain parts of your body. Skirts or shorts above the knee are not permitted. However, fundamentally it is important to use your common sense, taking into account the age, excitability and natural curiosity of the child.

1.5 – In the same way, avoid language or actions which may lead to (or which lead the child to think there was any intention of) any abusive, exploitative or improper relationship.

1.6 – Never be alone with a child in a closed space or put yourself in a compromising or vulnerable situation, unless it is to remove the child from immediate risk.

1.7 – Avoid making promises, speaking loudly or aggressively.

1.8 – Do not give presents or money to children unless this has been agreed by the educator responsible for them.

1.9 – Some children who take part in ACER's programmes have suffered traumatic events and even simple questions which remind them of these events, could cause them harm.

³ The only exception would be, in the highly unlikely situation, if you or someone else were under the immediate threat of violence. In these circumstances, use the least physical force necessary to prevent an attack and act in accordance with your training so that the situation returns as quickly as possible to normal.

1.10 - Never work under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Do not smoke in ACER facilities.

1.11 - Do not carry weapons or other dangerous objects.

1.12 – Taking photographs of or filming children or their families is something which must be done with extreme caution. Before doing this, speak to your coordinator and/or read Chapter 10 of this policy.

1.13 – Maintain complete confidentiality with any information or image of children with whom ACER works.

1.14 – The children's files are confidential and should not be looked at without the permission of the coordinator in charge. If you, as an educator, judge it important that a volunteer knows some information about a certain child, before taking any action, see that this is agreed with the centre coordinator. You must not take this type of decision yourself.

Remember that when you are in or working with ACER, you are considered a representative of ACER and as a result, your conduct can affect the reputation and the way ACER is seen in the community.

CHAPTER 2

INFORMATION FOR VISITORS

It is in ACER's policy that any visitor, taking into account their aims and length of visit, will receive, in advance, probably by email, information which includes:

- ✓ A welcome letter which informs them of the importance of observing the rules and of signing and returning that letter as proof of agreeing to those rules (appendix 1);
- ✓ A copy of Chapter 3 of this policy;
- ✓ Rules for acquiring and sharing information and/or images of the children;
- ✓ An assessment form.

CHAPTER 3

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR VISITORS

ACER must act within a policy of non-violence and of complete child protection. Below is the code of conduct which must be observed by every visitor who, in any way, through ACER, comes into contact with children or families with whom ACER works. Obviously, it is impossible to foresee every possible situation. In the case of omissions, the child's best interests must always be the priority.

Read the content below carefully. If you have any doubts in fulfilling what is expected of you, speak to the person accompanying you on this visit. These rules are primarily to guarantee the well-being of children within ACER, as well as to protect adults and the organisation from compromising situations.

3.1- Never use any type of violence when dealing with children or adults, regardless of any provocation. This includes reprimanding children⁴ (3).

3.2 - Behave calmly, positively, supportively and with encouragement around children.

3.3 - Treat every child with the utmost respect. Avoid any language or action which could be considered insulting, offensive, condescending, embarrassing or humiliating. Never refer to a child as a "street child" (or any similar term).

3.4 - Avoid language or actions which could be sexually provocative, suggestive or which insinuate (or which lead the child to think there was an insinuation of) a sexual relationship. For example, do not kiss, stroke or touch a child in an inappropriate or culturally unacceptable way; do not allow sexually provocative games; do not lie or roll around with children on the floor, bed or sofa. Take care in how you dress so as not to attract children's attention to certain parts of your body. We recommend trousers or skirts below the knee and shirts or t-shirts with appropriate necklines. Keep in mind the age, excitability and innocence of the child.

3.5 - In the same way, avoid language or actions which may lead to (or which lead the child to think there was any intention of) any abusive, exploitative or improper relationship.

3.6 - Never be alone with a child in a closed space or put yourself in a compromising or vulnerable situation, unless it is to remove the child from immediate risk.

3.7 – Avoid making promises, speaking loudly or aggressively.

3.8 – Do not give presents or money to children.

3.9 – Be careful when asking questions. There are children who take part in ACER's programmes who have experienced traumatic events and even simple questions which remind them of these events, could cause them harm.

⁴ The only exception would be, in the highly unlikely situation, if you or someone else were under the immediate threat of violence. In these circumstances, use the least physical force necessary to prevent an attack and act in accordance with your training so that the situation returns as quickly as possible to normal.

3.10 – Make sure your conduct is culturally appropriate. If you have doubts, speak to the ACER employee who is accompanying you during your visit. If you are with someone, do not make public shows of affection.

3.11 - Never make a visit under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Do not smoke in ACER facilities.

3.12 - Do not carry weapons or other dangerous objects.

3.13 – Only take photos of or film children or their families with the authorisation of the person accompanying you.

3.14 – Everyone must maintain complete confidentiality with any information or image of children with whom ACER works. If you notice something which should be reported, the ACER employee accompanying you is prepared to deal with this and to act accordingly, always taking into account the best interest of the child.

3.15 - We ask visitors to fill out an assessment form at the end of their visit.

Remember that when you are in or working with ACER, you are considered a representative of ACER and as a result, your conduct can affect the reputation and the way ACER is seen in the community. Therefore, the ACER employee accompanying you has the authority to bring the visit to a close if they judge it necessary.

CHAPTER 4

RECOGNISING SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE

The definition of abuse and exploitation is treatment, of any kind, which may result in the real or potential threat to a child's health, survival, development or dignity.

Recognising signs of abuse is very complex. There is no simple checklist which allows you to recognise cases easily and definitively. There are initial signs which cannot be taken as definitive proof and which must be assessed carefully. However, it is important that you do not ignore any significant changes in a child's behaviour, or any physical marks, fears or worries the child may have. Immediately inform an ACER employee or your coordinator, if you work for ACER.

This policy recognises four different types of abuse; some are a lot easier to notice than others.

Physical violence: is when a child's body is affected in some way. This includes grabbing, wounding, bruising, causing pain, poisoning, hitting, drowning or suffocating. It also includes enforcing certain tasks and jobs which clearly go beyond the capability of a child.

Physical indicators	Behavioural indicators	Family characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the presence of physical injuries which do not match up to the reason given; - concealing old injuries; - recent and older bruises; - belt, nail, hand marks; - finger marks (for example, three or four small marks on one side of the face and none on the other); - Burns with a well defined shape are suspicious. Knocking into a cigarette will leave only a light mark. Stubbing out a cigarette on a child will leave a round, red burn or light scar; - bruising or injuries on parts of the body which do not normally suffer from falls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - being afraid of parents or those in charge; - giving unrealistic causes for their injuries; - running away from home; - low self-esteem; - thinking they deserve the punishments; - saying they have suffered physical violence; - aggressive behaviour amongst peers; - distrusting adults - always being on guard, waiting for something bad to happen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - concealing their child's injuries or justifying them unconvincingly or in a contradictory way; - describing the child as naughty and deserving punishments; - blaming children for problems in the home; - believing in strict discipline as a way of educating; - having unrealistic expectations of their child's abilities, demanding too much of them; - giving teachers permission to physically punish their child

Psychological damage: is when a child is not treated with respect and courtesy and may feel frightened by threats, bullying or teasing. This includes repeatedly rejecting and humiliating the child, or negating their value as a human being.

Physical indicators	Behavioural indicators	Family characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - health problems with no organic cause: obesity, speech impediments, sleep deprivation, skin conditions; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social isolation; - fear in new situations - extreme passivity, irritation or aggression; - lack of affection; - excessive crying or attention seeking; - Constant tiredness; - sudden lack of interest or concentration ; - lying to get out of situations they cannot face up to or talk about; - low self-esteem; - regression to child-like behaviour; - problems in school, as they cannot perceive their intellectual limitations; - alcohol or drug abuse; - attempted suicide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of affection between parents and children; - depreciating the child, referring to them negatively and critically; - having unrealistic expectations of their child's abilities, demanding too much of them; - in many cases there will be alcohol or drug abuse; - threatening, terrorising or ignoring the child.

Sexual violence: is the direct or indirect harassment, exploitation or sexual corruption of children, by adults or other children. It can also include exposing children to or not protecting children from any form of pornography or sexual activity.

Physical indicators	Behavioural indicators	Family characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sexually transmitted diseases; - pain, itching or bleeding in the vagina or anus, causing difficulty in walking or sitting; - sudden urine infections; - little control over the sphincter or incontinence (not being able to control going to the toilet); - premature pregnancy or abortion; - weight loss or gain (aiming to become less attractive to their attacker); - injuries from physical violence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inappropriate interest in or advanced knowledge about sex for their age group; - Constant sexual games with friends, animals or toys; - compulsive masturbation; - drawing sexual organs with detail and characteristics beyond their age ability; - change in eating habits (anorexia, bulimia etc.); - disturbed sleep pattern; - fear or panic at being left alone with a certain person; - excessive embarrassment, including when changing in front of others; - lack of care in their appearance (to avoid physical attractiveness); - low self-esteem; - regression to child-like behaviour; - self-blame or self-punishment; - change in their school attendance and performance; - social isolation; - secretive relationships with others; - avoiding physical contact; - multiple personality disorder; - running away from home; - committing crimes; - involvement with youth prostitution; - alcohol and drug abuse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social isolation, little contact with neighbours, school, etc.; -the perpetrator tends to be extremely protective, jealous or possessive, not allowing the child normal social contact; - the perpetrator is always aiming to please or seduce; - the belief that sexual contact is a way of expressing affection; - accusing the child of promiscuity or being sexually seductive; - claiming someone else abused the child to protect a family member; - often one of the parents or people responsible suffered abuse as a child; - sporadic alcohol and drug abuse; - inversion of the parental role; - the spouse of the perpetrator keeps a physical and emotional distance.

Negligence: is the constant lack of appropriate care or protection for the child, or the complete absence of providing important aspects of care, such as medical care, nutrition, affection, safety, education or mental stimulation, which result in significant health problems or in the child's lack of development.

Physical indicators	Behavioural indicators	Family characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - growth deficiencies; - wearing clothes inappropriate to the weather; - lack of personal hygiene; - malnutrition or frequent hunger; - over-eating at meal times; - being late for or missing school; - health problems not taken care of; - low self-esteem; - alcohol and drug use; - constantly tired; - the child often suffers accidents (due to the adult not paying attention); - little brain activity (lack of mental stimulation). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - child involved in improper activities for their age: they are responsible for domestic tasks, looking after younger siblings etc. (It is common for this child to be seen as mature or precocious, but they are in fact taking on the responsibilities of an adult); - social isolation; - lack of affection; - lack of concentration and attention due to fatigue and unaddressed needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not being taken to school by parents or those in charge: absent from school meetings and constantly late; - not being taken to the doctor; - apathy and passivity; - alcohol and drug abuse; - not realising the physical and emotional needs of the child; - lack of care over their own hygiene and personal appearance.

Abandonment – “Is characterised as the abandonment or absence by those in charge of children or young people. Partial abandonment and temporary absence by parents exposes children to situations of risk. Total abandonment is the removal from the family group, leaving the child helpless, homeless, exposed to all sorts of danger.” (CLAVES – Latin America Centre for Studies into Violence and Health)

A sad aspect of the Brazilian reality that should be taken into account is the financial exploitation of children, through begging, child labour and sexual exploitation.

CHAPTER 5

PROCEDURE FOR ACQUIRING AND USING IMAGES AND INFORMATION RELATED TO CHILDREN

This section aims to guarantee the correct use and distribution of images taken and/or authorised by ACER.

The model letter attached (appendix 6) must be used whenever ACER authorises the use of images or authorises photographing or filming the facilities and people with whom ACER works. It is particularly important to use this, for example, when ACER is submitting a great number of photos to an organisation which will then select just a few of them for publication.

The Communication Centre and the Secretary General are those responsible in ACER for taking photographs or authorizing them to be taken by a third party.

If you attempt to write or circulate material of any kind (including e-mails to friends, blogs, articles etc.), or you are a photographer or receive any photo, video or other image of the children and families with whom ACER works, make sure its reproduction, publication or circulation complies with the following:

1. Every text or article must concentrate on the positive aspects of the child, their capabilities and successes. This idea must be reflected in their representation;
2. Guarantee that every article or reproduction represents exactly what ACER does and what can be achieved with the aim of integrating children and families into society and ensuring their rights;
3. Show the utmost respect and understanding for children and families and ensure that all images and texts do not cause any offence, embarrassment or worry for those involved. Avoid degrading, victimising or causing shame through images or language. Every subject must be treated with dignity;
4. Guarantee that every portrayal of a child is exact. Avoid sensationalising or manipulating images. For example, the children with whom ACER works are not street children and must not be portrayed as such. Do not make incorrect generalisations. Ensure that every photo is a fair and exact demonstration of the social, cultural and economic environment. If you wish to discuss the negative experience experienced by some children and families, ensure you paint a balanced picture (for example, using “before” and “after” images to show progress). Equally, you should aim to let people give their own descriptions wherever possible;
5. Guarantee that you do not publish any personal or physical information which would allow a child or family’s address to be identified, on the internet or in any other forms of communication;
6. Guarantee that photos which could be interpreted ambiguously have sub-titles to avoid them being seen out of context. Subtitles should be an exact description of the situation shown and must not use any personal details of the child;
7. ACER will be happy to reply quickly to any queries and give information about photos;
8. Make sure any requests to remove photos, images or texts which do not comply with ACER’s guidelines above are observed;

9. Make sure children are dressed appropriately and are not in poses that could be judged sexually provocative;
10. Listen to the ACER employee accompanying you. If they ask you to stop photographing, do so. If asked, you must show the person accompanying you the photos and other images you have taken and allow them to delete those which, for any reason, they judge inappropriate;
11. Ask permission from ACER's communication coordinator if you wish to use images for publication, obtaining donations or distribution;
12. If you agree to provide copies to photographers, guarantee that these are handed in, within two days of their visit, to the ACER employee who accompanied them, with explicit instructions regarding who made the request. Remember how disappointing it will be for the children if you do not send the photos.

ACER can take legal action in case of unauthorised use of material or use, which does not comply with the permission given.

We thank you for your understanding of all the mentioned points.

Appendix 1

Diadema, 19th June 2013.

Dear ACER visitor,

We have the pleasure of welcoming you and we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your interest and support. We are always happy to receive visits from those who support us or who is interested in promoting the well-being of the children and families with whom we work.

Aiming to comply with the international child protection standards, ACER works with an exhaustive child protection policy in every level of the organisation, of which our visitor procedures form an important part. Please read these procedures before your visit and confirm that you accept these by signing and returning a copy of this document to an ACER employee. If you wish, you may ask to see the entire content of our child protection policy, with which we are able to provide you.

The ACER employee accompanying you is trained in protecting the well-being of the children and families and is responsible for ensuring the success of your visit. If you have any doubts or questions during your visit, please speak to them.

Thank you for your cooperation with the aspects mentioned above. We hope you understand how it is important to ensure that the children and families who take part in our activities are safe and protected. At the end of the visit, we hope you will leave your comments in a feedback form, to help us continue to improve our work.

We would like to warmly welcome you and thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,



Jonathan Hannay
Secretário Geral

"I, _____, have read and understood the standards and rules set out. I recognise the importance of respecting the children's rights and I assume the responsibility of complying with ACER's Child Protection Policy."

Name

Company/Organisation

Signature

Date



Appendix 2

Visitor assessment form

The aim of this form is to obtain advice in how we can continue to improve ACER's work and image.

Date of visit ____/____/____ Name of employee who accompanied you: _____

1) Please let us know how you heard about ACER.

2) What motivated you to visit ACER?

3) On the whole, how did you find your visit? Leave your comments.

4) Did you have any worries during your visit?

Yes ☐ No ☐

5) Give details of the incident which worried you with as much detail as possible.

N.B. If you do not know details of the people or places involved, please give an approximate description

Please turn over to continue

Please provide any other information, suggestions or complaints which can help improve our work

Any final comments

It is not compulsory to leave your details. Only do so if you wish to receive free information in the future.

Many thanks.

Your details

Name	Tel.
Position	Email:
Organisation	