

مركز «كن حراً»
«Be-free» Center



For Safe Childhood ...
Conscious Adolescence ...
Cohesive Family ...
and Humanistic Society ...

Code of Ethics for the Protection of Children from Abuse

**Generated from the conference on
«Effective Strategies for the Prevention of Child
Online Pornography, Trafficking and Abuse»**



Code of Ethics for the Protection of Children from Abuse



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Introduction

Development of a Code of Ethics ...

Children are the most affected by what is happening in the world, whether it be war, technological advances, increased globalization, etc.

Children are also among the most affected by the policies and practices of government and society. These policies and practices influence either directly or indirectly the protection of children from abuse, which in the long-run have an impact on the future of society, as the children of today will be the leaders of tomorrow.

Therefore, child protection needs to be a top priority for all sectors of government and society that can have an effect on children or that can play a role in protecting them. To achieve this Be-Free developed a Code of Ethics that is a result of the work of a group of professionals and specialists from different sectors and from different parts of the world. Each member of this group contributed with his/her knowledge and experience to put together a Code of Ethics that can serve as guidance in protecting children from abuse. The work on this code of ethics started during the international conference, “Effective Strategies for the Prevention of child online Pornography, Trafficking and Abuse” that was held by Be-Free Program in Bahrain on May 9-10, 2009, and under the patronage and presence of Dr. Najat Ma’ala the United Nations

Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

This Code of Ethics pertains to the following sectors: Parliament, the Police, the Judiciary, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the media, non-governmental organizations, religious leaders, and internet service providers **(ISPs)**.

Implementation...

This Code of Ethics was written by different specialists in each of the above sectors to ensure its feasibility and applicability. It is recommended that the various sectors of government and society implement the part of the code that is relevant to their profession and start integrating it into their policies and practices to make the world a better place for children.

Sharing Experiences...

We would like to learn from the experiences of each other. Please send us your experiences in applying this Code of Ethics in your work, and we will put it on the websites (www.befreecenter.org, and www.protectchildrennow.org) to share it with other organizations.

Media:

Code of Ethics for all types of media including print, digital, satellite, etcetera:

1. Always put the interests and protection of children first when distributing, disseminating or otherwise making available any information.
2. Do not pass judgment on individuals on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, age, family connections, religious belief, physical or intellectual ability, or any other personal characteristics.
3. Remember that responsibility for child abuse always rests with the adult(s) in the situation. Never blame the child for any violation of his/her rights.
4. Be especially careful when reporting any events related to child abuse to ensure that the child will not be harmed, either directly or indirectly.
5. Do not allow advertising or other commercial considerations to undermine accuracy, fairness or independence of information or reporting related to child abuse.

6. Do whatever is possible to educate and raise awareness about the different issues and situations that can lead to child abuse.
7. Ensure that media sensationalism about child abuse stories does not compromise the protection of the child. Always prioritize child protection over sensationalism and shock journalism.
8. Be vigilant in checking that media content never contains any material that can lead to, support or encourage child abuse or even promotion of child abuse. This includes hypertext links, website links, photos, graphics or any and all other methods of presenting information.
9. Remember that children are one of the most valuable and vulnerable members of our society. Therefore, try to ensure that no mistakes are made when dealing with stories of child abuse. If mistakes are made, take all possible steps to correct them and to set the record straight for the public.
10. Protect children from deliberate and accidental exposure to adult material by applying the latest technology for protecting children from unsafe content, particularly in the realm of electronic media.

11. Use the media to highlight the importance of child protection and to draw attention to issues related to child protection, targeting adults and children as appropriate.
12. Be courageous. Once the facts of a situation have been established, do not hesitate to expose and hold individuals accountable, regardless of their social/political/financial power or influence.
13. Be careful to maintain control over all material in all forms (including advertisements) to ensure that it does not cause any harm or violate basic child protection principles.
14. Ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the child and consider all ethical issues in all reports that include real cases of child abuse.
15. Work in partnership with other organizations as much as possible to encourage child protection and to reduce the harm that the media can have on children.
16. Expose information about people, websites, organizations and any other groups proven to have engaged in actions that led to child abuse or proven to have abused children.

17. Stop subliminal sexual messages in all material of any type directed at children.
18. Encourage materials that can help to raise awareness of strategies for child protection.
19. Strictly enforce a policy of withdrawing and rejecting any advertisements from all media, including internet sites, that promote child abuse or exploitation or that fail to protect children. This policy should be adopted and implemented by all advertising companies and media companies.
20. Involve children and youth in all activities aimed at educating and empowering them in the face of child abuse.
21. Support adequate training of media professionals and set up monitoring mechanisms to ensure the implementation of this Code of Ethics.

Parliament:

Code of Ethics for Parliament:

1. Make the issue of child rights and child protection a top priority in the parliamentary agenda.
2. Be aware of the achievements and progress related to child rights and child protection in other parliaments of the world and take into consideration the lessons that have been learnt.
3. Work in partnership with other parties to achieve better laws and practices to ensure child protection.
4. Support child protection issues regardless of the pressures that might be applied from powerful people, parties, interest groups or organizations.
5. Ensure that the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are reflected in legislation and in practice. Legislation and practices surrounding child rights and child protection need to be revised at the end of each parliamentary cycle to keep up to date with the rapidly changing technology used by offenders to commit crimes of child abuse and to evade the law.

6. Foster a culture in which child protection and child rights are taken into consideration when drawing up any legislation in the country.
7. Draft and adopt national legislation for child protection and child rights that is congruent with the highest global standards.
8. Adopt a policy of questioning all persons, groups and organizations if any conduct violates the rights of the child and/or results in harm through direct or indirect exploitation of the child.
9. Take serious steps to accede to and implement UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child and to create effective procedures for monitoring and reporting the implementation and application of these conventions.
10. Encourage and support research into the field of child abuse in order to understand the scale of the problem and the behavior of the offenders.
11. Seek information and counsel from experienced groups specializing in child protection.

12. Work with relevant local organizations to ensure a safe environment for children, to protect children from abuse, and to adopt UN norms and standards in this regard.
13. Ensure that funds from the national budget are continually allocated to ensure an effective child protection system.
14. Consult all relevant stakeholders (international organizations, civil society actors, etc.) to develop and implement comprehensive policies aimed at preventing and counteracting all forms of child abuse while ensuring the protection and rehabilitation of child victims.
15. Demonstrate a commitment to child protection and child rights by promoting measures that hinder the development of circumstances that make children vulnerable to abuse.
16. Involve children in policy decisions that affect their lives.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):

Code of Ethics for non-governmental organizations that work with children or are related to children in any way including women's NGOs, legal NGOs, human rights NGOs, etcetera:

1. Always make child protection a high priority in the organization.
2. Lobby the government with other NGOs to advance child protection and to raise the profile of cases related to child protection.
3. Whenever possible, work in partnership with the government to raise awareness and to offer the expertise and services of the NGO.
4. Whenever possible, participate in international advocacy to protect children, as global solidarity helps to protect children both locally and worldwide.
5. Raise awareness in society and take steps to influence public opinion about all issues relates to child protection.

6. Ensure that NGO staff and volunteers are educated about child protection laws so that they can avoid committing any type of child abuse in their personal lives, within the NGO, and in the course of the NGOs work.
7. Uphold and practice the principles of honesty, confidentiality, truthfulness, integrity, courage and accuracy when dealing with issues related to child abuse.
8. Develop child protection guidelines and procedures and carry out adequate child protection training of all staff to ensure the monitoring and implementation of these guidelines.
9. Involve children and youth in all activities and issues affecting their lives.

Police:

Code of Ethics for the police:

1. Make a conscientious effort to raise awareness among and to train officers and staff in areas related to:
 - Conventions on the Rights of the Child and basic child protection issues and procedures.
 - Skills to communicate in a sensitive and non-judgmental way with children who are victims of abuse or in danger of being abused.
 - Skills to deal with perpetrators of child abuse.
 - Skills to deal with all who are affected by child abuse.
 - Methods to combat desensitization and vicarious trauma for those officers/staff who deal with child abuse issues on a regular basis.
2. Ensure credibility and integrity in all actions and communications relating to child abuse cases in which the police are involved.
3. Put the best interests of child and child protection first in any case involving children.

4. Maintain a high standard of professionalism in all efforts to ensure child protection.
5. Carefully select a committee whose members are highly professional and focused individuals, and train the committee members to interact with the police about child abuse cases and child protection concerns.
6. Utilize the most advanced technology available to ensure child protection and to prevent child abuse.
7. Have a proactive and robust strategy for the protection of children from all forms of abuse and for dealing with child abuse cases, and implement this strategy with the utmost thoughtfulness, care and integrity.
8. Develop people-friendly strategies to gain the trust of people and the community, especially families and children.
9. Have a global view of child protection issues and learn from other countries' experiences while acting locally on child protection issues.

10. Form alliances with international police and law enforcement bodies and other internationally relevant organizations committed to the protection of the child in an effort to exchange best practices and previous experience, and to share data on perpetrators.
11. List child safety and child protection as one of the highest priorities of a police officer's role and responsibilities.
12. Commit to applying child protection laws to whoever violates such laws without regard to the social/financial/political power and influence of the offending individual or organization.
13. Address corruption in law enforcement, recognizing corruption as a major obstacle to effective law enforcement and protection of children.

Judicial System:

Code of Ethics for judges and judicial system:

1. Ensure the availability of child friendly courts.
2. Ensure that judges involved in child abuse cases are highly trained and are aware of child abuse, grooming techniques, and internet crimes.
3. Ensure the use of child-sensitive methods in questioning children about abuse and in investigating all cases related to child abuse.
4. Ensure that in all judicial decisions, judges have the best interests of the child as a first priority.
5. Ensure that the child's intention is never questioned when dealing with a child abuse case and that the adult is always held accountable.
6. Ensure a fair and thorough investigation of child abuse cases, which often may require involving experts on the subject.

7. Apply severe penalties to adults who are involved in all forms of child abuse, especially pornography and sexual abuse.
8. Ensure that all judges and lawyers have access to experts and specialists to help in cases of child abuse.
9. Ensure that the legal system is convenient, accessible and open in order to encourage children and families to report child abuse cases.
10. Ensure that under no circumstances is special treatment or consideration or leniency extended to someone who might have a role in child abuse based on their political/financial power, social position or influence.
11. Promote collaboration with judiciaries from other countries to ensure effective prosecution of crimes of a transnational nature.
12. Address corruption in the judiciary and work to maximize judicial capacity to resolve incidences of corruption by taking them to the proper authorities to enact strict penalties.

Religious leaders:

Code of Ethics for religious leaders:

1. Promote religious views about the value of children and child protection including all the scriptures that emphasise being sensitive, aware and careful when dealing with children.
2. Explain the importance of child protection for families and communities, link child protection with religion, and promote a culture of child protection.
3. Use every possible channel, including written and spoken word, to encourage the best methods of child protection and to condemn all types of child abuse.
4. Encourage families, schools and other organizations to adopt practices that aid in child protection.
5. Get involved in known cases of severe and chronic child abuse and work to turn the case into a community issue rather than a private family matter in an effort to foster a culture that values and protects the innocence of children, while ensuring that the child and his/her family do not get harmed.

6. Use religious events to promote child protection practices and concepts.
7. Be role models in the effort to protect children so that faithful followers can emulate their leaders' beliefs and practices.
8. Encourage internal monitoring of religious peers and a climate of openness to ensure that religious figures, volunteers, and houses of worship do not become directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly, involved in actions or practices which do not serve the rights of the child.

Interent Service Providers (ISPs):

Code of Ethics for telecommunication companies and internet service providers:

1. When providing any service to children or families, be explicit about all risks for child abuse that may be associated with such service.
2. Develop a highly intelligent system to determine the identities and behavioral pathways of child sex offenders and child abusers, and to prevent and halt their activities.
3. Utilizing the latest technology and multiple media outlets, commit to and promote a meaningful and effective educational program about all the dangers that children might be subjected to online.
4. When providing different choices or consumer packages to parents, schools and caregivers, promote those packages that include ways to effectively control access to websites that might harm children in any way, and offer advice about the importance of child protection.

5. ISP providers should follow the global trend of providing an effective and user-friendly ISP feedback system (feedback loop or FBL) to better detect child abuse and child pornography. When abuse or pornography is reported, alert the proper authorities, take immediate action to remove the pornography and/or to resolve the abuse while prioritizing the best interests of the child.
6. Work closely with parliament, governmental organizations, NGOs and other related parties such as the police on issues of child protection.
7. Closely monitor the development of other ISPs in the world and take into consideration the lessons learned from their experiences and the safeguards that they adopted.
8. Never compromise child safety for financial reward.
9. Work with effective international organizations that aim to help ISPs stop child abuse.
10. Research, Identify and develop technologies to combat the abuse that is perpetrated across the systems provided by ISPs.

11. Assess the child protection efficacy of any new technology before adopting it.
12. Provide technical, financial and other types of support for national monitoring of child pornography and grooming, including help lines and educational programs for children and caregivers.
13. Work with other local parties to ensure that websites with child pornography content are not registered and that access to such websites is blocked.
14. Join financial companies (banks, credit card companies etc.), police and other civil society actors in counteracting the dissemination and purchase of child images .

Ministry of Education:

Code of Ethics for Ministry of Education:

1. Conduct thorough and scientific studies to understand the trend of child abuse at schools.
2. Be up to date on electronic and other threats of child abuse and ensure that staff in schools are updated as well, especially principals, teachers and social workers.
3. Incorporate basic protection skills (online and offline) in children and teen curriculums and activities in a manner that is appropriate to their age group, their level of knowledge, and the modern world in which they live.
4. Ensure that children of all educational levels have access in their schools to a knowledgeable, trustworthy and highly trained person to whom they can report child abuse when it happens or when the child is fearful that it is going to happen.
5. Always make the child's best interest the top priority when dealing with child abuse cases in schools, giving it even greater importance than the reputation of the Ministry or the school.

6. Act in partnership with governmental and non-governmental parties working for child protection, child abuse prevention, and victim recovery.
7. Exercise control over the written and digital material that enters schools (including websites) to ensure that this material does not contain any content that is of sexual or other nature that may harm children.
8. Always consider parents as partners when working with cases of child abuse.
9. Employ IT experts in schools who are already or are willing to be trained and updated regularly on the issue of child protection on the internet, and who have the skills to block/filter material and manage pupils misuse of inappropriate material and their reaction to exposure to it, and who can teach students how to block and filter inappropriate websites at home.
10. Regularly and thoroughly monitor school facilities, especially toilets where younger children are more likely to get abused by older students.
11. In a non-frightening way, provide students with basic self-protection skills to avoid and combat the types of abuse that children might be subject to.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

Code of Ethics for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs encourages relevant government party to sign and endorse international conventions related to children and ensure their implementation.
2. Convey the complete and honest picture when representing child welfare and safety issues at international events such as UPRs (Universal Periodic Reviews conducted by the UN).
3. Track child abusers, child traffickers and all others who have committed any crime against children, even if they are in another country, and alert international law enforcement bodies and immigration authorities to ensure that offenders do not have the chance to contact children in whatever country they are currently located in.
4. Work in partnership with other countries and international organizations to prevent child abuse, child pornography and child trafficking.
5. Make agreements with other countries to report and exchange information about child-related criminals and to cooperate in stopping criminals from harming other children.

6. Cooperate with other countries in child abuse investigations and share information, research and experiences in order to have a more global understanding of the issue of child abuse, child pornography and child trafficking.
7. Ensure that adequate resources from the national budget are allocated to the development of projects focusing on child protection issues.
8. Ensure the training of diplomatic staff on child protection issues, focusing particularly on their role in preventing and counteracting crimes against children committed by their nationals.



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