



Child Protection Policy

Introduction

Overture Outreach International (Overture International) and its partners have a shared belief that we have a special responsibility for the safety and well-being of our beneficiaries, volunteers, partners and staff, to protect them from any behavior that violates their rights. As such, we are committed to being advocates for the most vulnerable in our communities.

This policy is grounded in **five basic guiding principles** of child protection and describes the steps that will be taken to ensure that children are protected from all types of abuse in the delivery of programs funded by Overture International.

1. We have **zero tolerance** for any form of abuse, neglect and/or mistreatment.
2. All children have **equal rights to protection** from abuse and exploitation.
3. **Children are empowered and educated about their rights**, personal safety and steps they can take if there is a problem.
4. **Child protection is integrated into all aspects** of our programs, strategies, and work practices.
5. All suspicions and accusations of abuse **are taken seriously**.

Our Commitment to Prevent Abuse

Overture International is committed to the fight for the respect of children's rights. Thus, the safeguarding of children is our priority in the execution of our mission. We, therefore:

- **Promote the well-being of children**, encourage family communication and mediation, and the strengthening of family ties.
- Work to **prevent cases of abuse and violence** involving children and seek advocacy with competent authorities for support and respect of children's rights, especially in caring for children in difficult circumstances who are separated from their families and/or who may be victims of abuse and violence.
- Are committed to protecting children whom we and our partners serve and taking the necessary steps to **identify those who pose a risk** to children.
- Require all staff and volunteers to **attend annual trainings** on our Child Protection Policy and partner-specific child protection protocols.

Non-Discrimination Statement

Overture International and its partners strives to demonstrate Christian love, promote respect, well-being and dignity for all children. It is our goal to protect all children regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion, social background and culture.

Overture International explicitly recognizes the additional needs of children living in poverty, those from minority ethnic groups, and children with disabilities who face traditional barriers, specifically on discrimination and communication. The Child Protection Policy of Overture International **applies equally to all children without discrimination.**

What is Abuse?

Abuse or maltreatment can take many forms. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines **child abuse or maltreatment** as: “all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power (WHO, June 8, 2020).” Overture International has adopted this as our definition of abuse.

Requirement for Sponsored Partners

All partners sponsored by Overture International are required to have their own child protection policy that is aligned with Overture International’s **five guiding principles** (*refer to Introduction*). These policies must include local laws on child abuse, procedures that are required by the local law, a list of local authorities to whom child abuse cases are reported, as well as a list of partner organizations that can provide the appropriate support services for victims.

Media Communications

Overture International is committed to serving our donors and volunteers with quality educational and philanthropic resources. Our social media platforms are used to share program information and to engage with our donors and volunteers. All communications via these public forums must be **respectful and mutually beneficial** for the organization, our partners, and our beneficiaries.

Therefore, we use the following guidelines so that **every possible measure is taken to protect children:**

- The **dignity and rights of every child are to be respected** in every circumstance.
- When reporting on a child, special attention is taken to ensure that each child's **right to privacy and confidentiality is respected**. For this reason, we do not disclose a child's last name, personal address or other information that could be used to locate a child.
- Stories or images are **not published which might put a child, family, or community at risk** even when identities are changed, obscured or omitted.
- **Stories are not staged**. For example, we do not ask children to tell a story or take an action that is not part of their own life or history.
- **Permission is obtained** from the child and his or her guardian for all interviews, videotaping and, when possible, for documentary photographs. When possible and appropriate, permission is obtained in writing.
- Images are not taken or used of children who are **inappropriately clothed**.
- **Health information is not published** without the family or individual's written consent

Use of Overture International materials: All Overture International and its partner's materials are protected by copyrights, including text, photographs, other images and videotapes. Permission to reproduce any Overture International material must be requested from the originating Overture International office and will only be granted on condition that these guidelines are adhered to.

Code of Conduct

The staff and volunteers of Overture International acknowledge that our personal and professional conduct is a representation of our organization and we are committed to holding one another accountable to honesty, respect, and integrity.

Specifically, when we are in contact with children, **we will not:**

- Physically abuse a child
- Develop a physical or sexual relationship with a child
- Use inappropriate, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, or culturally inappropriate language or behavior towards a child
- Behave in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- Sleep in the same bed as a child for who they are caring for and who is not a member of their immediate family
- Condone, or participate in behavior of a child which is illegal, unsafe, or abusive
- Hire a child for domestic or other labor that is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, especially when it interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities.

Additionally, all staff and others in contact with children **will:**

- Treat all children with respect regardless of race, color, gender, religion, or any other status
- Be aware of and manage situations that may present risks
- Ensure that a culture of transparency exists in the workplace so that poor practice or abusive behavior does not go unchallenged
- Teach children about their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what recourse they have if a problem arises
- Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise their concerns with the appropriate adult authorities
- Ensure that another adult is present whenever possible if children are in the vicinity

Reporting Abuse or Other Child Protection Concerns

All reported child abuse concerns must be addressed promptly by informing the point of contact specified within a particular program, regional child protection agency, and local law enforcement. Information must be kept in a confidential manner that does not harm the victim or the person reporting the abuse.

The **point of contact for Overture International** is the Executive Director, who will serve as an objective advisor for ongoing reporting, protection of victims, due process and release of information as deemed appropriate.

Within the United States and Haiti, child sexual abuse concerns are reported to your local or state law enforcement agency.

The two **Child Protection Agencies in Haiti** are the Institute of Social Well-being and Research (IBESR) and the Brigade for the Protection of Minors (BPM).

IBESR is the government of Haiti office responsible for children's welfare and well-being. The main office is in Port-au-Prince, however, there is an office in each of the Regional Departments of Haiti. For more information, call: +509 3170-3799; +509 3170-3795; +509 3170-3816

BPM is the Haitian government authorities responsible for the protection of children. BPM is located in each of the Regional Departments of Haiti and can be reached through the local law enforcement. For more information, call: +509 3721-5079 (Port au Prince) or +509 3710-3076 (Les Cayes)

In addition, in the case of alleged abuse by members of any religious denomination or entity, the first report should be made local and state law enforcement. Reports should then be made to the appropriate religious authority or community.