



Policy/Guidance on the Implementation of USAID Child Safeguarding Standards

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 200

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Policy/Guidance on the Implementation of USAID's Child Safeguarding Standards

Child Safeguarding refers to all activities intended to prevent and respond to abuse, exploitation, or neglect by USAID personnel, contractors, and recipients or as a result of USAID-supported programming. USAID commits to deterring all activities that would facilitate or condone child abuse, exploitation, or neglect by USAID personnel, as well as by contractors, sub-contractors, recipients, and sub-recipients as a result of USAID-supported programming. Through the adoption of these Child Safeguarding Standards, USAID pledges to adhere to the standards stated throughout this ADS mandatory reference.

USAID Child Safeguarding Standards

Children living in countries receiving USAID development and assistance face a range of challenges, including extreme poverty, conflict, natural disasters, and disease. These challenges can increase the risk of child abuse, exploitation, or neglect. Poor child protection safeguards within programs intending to address these challenges may place vulnerable children at further risk. Research and anecdotal evidence indicates that persons with a history and proclivity to abusing children will often seek positions of power and authority to gain access to vulnerable individuals. They may particularly seek employment within countries, like many of those served by USAID programs, with social welfare, protection, and judicial systems too weak or underdeveloped to protect children and other vulnerable populations against child abuse, exploitation, or neglect. In addition, contractors or recipients that design and/or implement projects or programs without considering conditions that might contribute to child abuse, exploitation, or neglect, may inadvertently put children at risk. For example, organizing activities that are inadequately supervised or singling out children affected by HIV in a way that contributes to stigma and discrimination may compromise USAID's ability to deliver effective aid.

The USAID Child Safeguarding Standards are designed to complement the USAID Counter Trafficking in Persons Code of Conduct (see [ADS 201mah, Guidance on the Implementation of the Counter-Trafficking in Persons \(C-TIP\) Code of Conduct](#)), by expanding the range of actions prohibited by USAID under the C-TIP Code of Conduct, to include abuse, exploitation, or neglect of children. However, trafficking is considered an egregious form of child abuse and exploitation and can involve neglect as well. The C-TIP provisions in [ADS 201mah](#), which prohibit the acquisition of a child through the use of force, fraud, or coercion or otherwise for the purpose of exploiting a child for profit through forced labor or prostitution, remain in effect.

Likewise, the USAID code of conduct for protection of beneficiaries, including children, of assistance from sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian relief operations, applicable to International Disaster Assistance (IDA)-funded programs, remains in effect in accordance with [ADS 251, International Disaster Assistance](#).

USAID pledges to:

1. Prohibit all USAID personnel from engaging in child abuse, exploitation, or neglect and require USAID personnel to:
 - Comply with host country and local child welfare and protection legislation and international standards, whichever gives greater protection, and with U.S. law as applicable.
 - Maintain an environment that prevents child abuse, exploitation, or neglect, including, but not limited to, limiting unsupervised interactions with children; prohibiting exposure to pornography; and complying with applicable laws, regulations, or customs regarding the photographing, filming, or other image-generating activities of children.
2. Promote child-safe screening procedures when hiring USAID personnel, particularly personnel whose work brings them into direct contact with children.
3. Require USAID personnel to report suspected allegations of child abuse, exploitation, or neglect perpetrated by USAID personnel and ensure that USAID investigates and responds to allegations of child abuse, or exploitation, or neglect by USAID personnel.
 - USAID treats allegations of USAID personnel engaging in child abuse, exploitation, or neglect as suspected cases of employee misconduct or waste, fraud, and abuse in USAID programs. Allegations of child abuse, exploitation, or neglect must be reported to the Office of the Inspector General, Office of Investigations (OIG/I). The Inspector General Act and other pertinent laws provide protections of persons making hotline complaints. USAID personnel have the option of submitting complaints via telephone, U.S. mail, internet, or electronic mail. The OIG takes steps to protect the investigative information it receives, but cannot guarantee the confidentiality or security of information while it is transmitted over external telecommunications or information technology networks or through outside mail systems.
 - For telephone reporting, call 1-800-230-6539 or 202-712-1023.
 - Complaints may be sent to ig.hotline@usaid.gov.
 - Complaints may be completed online at Webform Submission (http://www.usaid.gov/oig/hotline/hotline_complaint_frm.html).
 - Complaints may be submitted in completed PDF form (<http://www.usaid.gov/oig/hotline/elecclaimform.pdf>).
 - Complaints may be faxed to 202-216-3801.

- Complaints may be mailed to:

U.S. Agency for International Development
Office of Inspector General
P.O. Box 657
Washington, DC 20044-0657

- USAID applies appropriate sanctions for violations of the USAID Child Safeguarding Standards in accordance with [ADS 485, Disciplinary Action - Foreign Service](#) and [ADS 487, Disciplinary and Adverse Actions Based upon Misconduct - Civil Service](#) and other applicable human resources policies on employee misconduct.

USAID personnel covered under these provisions (Sections 1 through 3) include Foreign Service Officers (FSOs); Civil Service employees, including those on term or temporary appointments, detailees; Foreign Service National direct-hire employees; Personal Service Contractors (PSCs) (including USPSCs, Cooperating Country National PSCs (CCNPSCs) and Third Country National PSCs (TCNPSCs); and other employees.

4. Require that all USAID contactors, sub-contractors, recipients, and sub-recipients abide by the child safeguarding principles in the terms of their award to prevent and respond to child abuse, exploitation, or neglect.

USAID personnel who suspect violations of the child safeguarding principles by USAID awardees should follow the reporting procedures in number 3 above, with a copy to the cognizant Contracting/Agreement Officer (CO/AO) for the award.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The **Bureau for Management, Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA)** is responsible for incorporating standard provisions in USAID grants and cooperative agreements, and the AIDAR clause in contracts, which require awardees to abide by child safeguarding principles.

The **Office of the Inspector General (OIG)** investigates allegations of USAID employee misconduct, mismanagement or violations of law, rules, or regulations by employees or program participants, as well as waste, fraud, and abuse in USAID programs, including child abuse, exploitation, or neglect. The OIG conducts investigations into allegations of criminal, civil, and administrative violations related to the Agency. The OIG's investigative priority is to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse within USAID programs and operations and to foster and encourage the integrity of USAID employees, as well that of our contractors, recipients, and host country counterparts.

Regional and Functional Bureaus are strongly encouraged to identify opportunities to integrate or deepen child safeguarding concerns into ongoing activities primarily to

provide technical officers with the programmatic skills to design programming in a way that reduces risks of child abuse, exploitation, or neglect. For instance, the Bureau of Global Health provided training to USAID personnel and partners to support the development of child safeguarding policies within existing projects. Effective efforts to combat child abuse, exploitation, or neglect require sustained attention and demonstrated political will of Bureau leadership.

USAID Mission Directors: Safeguarding children is an important priority of the Administration. Mission Directors are expected to support the implementation of the Agency's Child Safeguarding Standards to the greatest extent practicable and to identify opportunities to strengthen child safeguards in their respective Missions.

The **Office of Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM)** will inform all USAID employees of the USAID Child Safeguarding Standards (see [ADS 487](#) and [ADS 485](#) to cover child safeguarding violations).

Definitions

(1) **Child:** A child or children are defined as persons who have not attained 18 years of age.

(2) **Child abuse, exploitation, or neglect:** Constitutes any form of physical abuse; emotional ill-treatment; sexual abuse; neglect or insufficient supervision; trafficking; or commercial, transactional, labor, or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, well-being, survival, development, or dignity. It includes, but is not limited to: any act or failure to act which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm to a child, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm to a child.

(3) **Physical abuse:** Constitutes acts or failures to act resulting in injury (not necessarily visible), unnecessary or unjustified pain or suffering without causing injury, harm or risk of harm to a child's health or welfare, or death. Such acts may include, but are not limited to: punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, or hitting (regardless of object used), or burning. These acts are considered abuse regardless of whether they were intended to hurt the child.

(4) **Sexual Abuse:** Constitutes fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.

(5) **Emotional abuse or ill treatment:** Constitutes injury to the psychological capacity or emotional stability of the child caused by acts, threats of acts, or coercive tactics. Emotional abuse may include, but is not limited to: humiliation, control, isolation, withholding of information, or any other deliberate activity that makes the child feel diminished or embarrassed.

(6) **Exploitation:** Constitutes the abuse of a child where some form of remuneration is involved or whereby the perpetrators benefit in some manner. Exploitation represents a form of coercion and violence that is detrimental to the child's physical or mental health, development, education, or well-being.

(7) **Neglect:** Constitutes failure to provide for a child's basic needs within USAID-funded activities that are responsible for the care of a child in the absence of the child's parent or guardian.

References

1. Public Law 109-95—The Assistance for Orphans and other Vulnerable Children Act of 2005 (PL 109-95).
2. U.S. Government Action Plan on Children in Adversity—A Framework for International Assistance: 2012-2017, December 2012.
3. USAID Counter Trafficking Code of Conduct, Executive Message, February 1, 2011; Guidance on USAID Counter Trafficking in Persons Code of Conduct (See ADS Mandatory Reference 201mah—Guidance on the Implementation of the Counter-Trafficking in Persons (C-TIP) Code of Conduct).