

# CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

## A Guide to Understanding Mercy Corps Child Safeguarding Policy

This document provides additional guidance around Mercy Corps' Child Safeguarding Policy and is not a replacement for the actual policy. This guidance reinforces Mercy Corps' commitment to ensure the protection of children we come into contact with through our work.

Mercy Corps has special obligations to ensure the safety and dignity of all children we come in contact with. Mercy Corps has zero tolerance for any conduct towards children that is exploitative or abusive. This conduct could be physical, emotional, sexual, verbal or involve negligence.



View the Child Safeguarding Policy in the Digital Library.



View the eLearning course in Talent Development at [Talent.MercyCorps.org](https://Talent.MercyCorps.org)



Mercy Corps expects all of its team members, partners and visitors to treat all children (**defined as anyone under the age of 18**) with respect and dignity and to always act in the best interest of the child's physical and emotional well-being, never engaging in conduct that could be perceived as abusive or exploitative.



Mercy Corps requires team members to report any abusive or exploitative behavior involving children. Anonymous reports to the Integrity Hotline are available and anyone may request to stay anonymous. **Remember it is not your role to investigate**, that will be done through an established process.



Mercy Corps **will not tolerate** any form of **retaliation** against team members, partners or beneficiaries who report Child Safeguarding concerns if the report is done in good faith.



These types of allegations are very sensitive and Mercy Corps treats all information with the greatest respect for confidentiality. The safety, security and well-being of survivors is our primary concern along with the safety and security of the witnesses and accused.



Identifiable images and stories of children can only be obtained and used after receiving consent from parents or guardians, preferably in writing when possible. **Consent should also be obtained from the child when they are age 14 or older, (in addition to the consent of the parent or guardian).**

### THE FOLLOWING KEY TERMS ARE IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND:



**Abuse** includes physical abuse; emotional ill-treatment; sexual abuse; neglect or insufficient supervision; trafficking; to commercial, transactional, labor, or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, well-being, survival, development, or dignity.



**Physical abuse** is defined as 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.



**Emotional abuse** includes injury to the psychological capacity or emotional stability of the child caused by acts, threats of acts, or coercive tactics.



**Sexual abuse** includes forcing, coercing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities.

### REMEMBER!

[Mercycorps.org/integrityhotline](https://Mercycorps.org/integrityhotline)  
or  
[integrityhotline@mercycorps.org](mailto:integrityhotline@mercycorps.org)



# Policy Talk

## QUESTIONS

It is common practice in my country to hit a child when they disobey or misbehave. Why can't I grab and shake a child when they misbehave during one of our Mercy Corps events?

What does it mean to neglect a child under this policy?

We always take photos of the children in our programs and use them in posters to highlight our work. How can I be expected to get permission from the parents of all these children?

I saw a staff member of a partner organization grab the arm of a boy that was waiting outside the office at one of our program locations. The boy was thrown to the floor by this staff member and he told the boy he was "stupid". No one else thought anything of the incident. What should I do?

## ...AND ANSWERS

The children involved in our programs or other children a Mercy Corps team member might interact with while working, cannot be physically harmed in any way. **This violates our policy and values of acting in the best interest of children.**

Neglect for purposes of this policy refers to a persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs that could result in the serious impairment of a child's physical, emotional or mental development. This could include a failure to supervise or protect from known harms, provide shelter or safe working or living conditions. **It could also include putting a child at risk of abuse or exploitation.** Country specific reporting procedures to authorities should be followed.

**A permission form is available on the HUB and is titled "Consent & Release Form for Interviews, Photos & Videos".** Your communications team member may already have one available for you as well. Even though this may be an inconvenience, it is out of respect for the dignity of the children and their parents that we ask consent to take their photo or tell their story.

This type of behavior violates Mercy Corps' Child Safeguarding policy and needs to be reported. **Partners are expected to follow our policies and operate in a manner that supports Mercy Corps values.**