

## PROJECT HOPE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



Each day, as many as 150 individuals with criminal records apply for positions with nonprofit organizations, many of whom are registered sex offenders. The United States National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reports that, on average, a serial child sex offender will commit 150 acts of molestation against a child prior to being caught. This data was captured as part of a survey completed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation among incarcerated child molesters. We understand that organizations serving children, particularly those from distressed circumstances, are most susceptible to being targeted by those who prey on children.

Project Hope has a zero-tolerance policy for incidents of child abuse. We understand that protecting children is our most important responsibility, and that our programs serve no positive purpose if we do not ensure their safety. In EVERY case, the report of molestation and abuse, or suspected molestation or abuse, will be treated with absolute priority, and Project Hope will do everything in its power to ensure the successful prosecution of the perpetrator to the fullest extent of the law.

This document provides guidelines and establishes procedures for employees, board members, volunteers, consultants, or anyone conducting or involved (defined as “Individuals”) in youth programming on behalf of Project Hope. Note that such “Individuals” do not include outside vendors, contractors, or service providers, unless they are directly involved with Project Hope youth programming.

### **Procedures for Reported and Suspected Abuse:**

- All incidents – whether suspected, confirmed, or reported by a child or anyone else – will be immediately reported to the Legal Representatives (Sara Cleland & Olga Rodriguez).
- All Project Hope staff and volunteers are mandated to report any suspected or reported incident.
- Legal Representatives will immediately report the information to the Board of Directors.
- The Project Hope Board of Directors in the United States, in cooperation with the Legal Representatives in Colombia, will immediately take action in the following ways:
  - Contact the parent and child involved immediately to receive a statement of the incident
  - Contact appropriate authorities
  - Fully cooperate with an investigation by being fully transparent and timely in our response
  - Ensure that the Legal Representatives and staff are complying with the Child Protection Policy

## **Preventative Measures**

All board members, staff, and volunteers are mandatory reporters. All reports or suspicion of abuse and inappropriate behavior will be reported. Project Hope will ensure that no child in our care is ever left alone with a volunteer that has not had a current background check. When possible, 2 adults will be present whenever children are in our care.

The Project Hope Board of Directors acknowledges that it is their responsibility to protect the children in care and will ensure that

- annual background checks are conducted for all staff members
- the Executive Director is completing their annual responsibilities as they pertain to this Child Protection Policy

The Executive Director will ensure that

- all mission team members go through a background check
- new hires complete an orientation within 2 weeks of being hired to thoroughly explain the Child Protection Policy
- all staff members, board members, and volunteers annually review this policy
- all staff members and volunteers understand that they are mandatory reporters
- all volunteers sign the Project Hope Volunteer Agreement Form

All Staff Members will ensure that

- volunteers are fully aware of this policy
- Volunteers who have not submitted a background check are never left alone with children in our care
- children are taught about their rights and how to report conduct that makes them uncomfortable

## **Transparency in Policy and Social Media:**

- All children and caregivers have access to this plan and understand their rights .
- All children and caregivers have the ability to contact the legal representatives of Project Hope to report any suspicion of abuse.
- Both parents and children have the right to refuse their photo being used in promotional materials and on social media.
- All promotional materials that include photos or stories of families in our program will honor the child and will never include personal information such as school, last name, or other details as requested by the family.

This Child Protection Policy was reviewed and agreed upon by the staff and Board of Directors of Project Hope on November 20, 2023 and will be reviewed again on or before November 30, 2025.

*Sara Cleland* 11/15/24

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Sara Cleland, Project Hope Legal Representative & Executive Director  
sara@projecthopeministries.org Date

*Olga Rodriguez* 11/15/24

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Olga Rodriguez, Project Hope Legal Representative Date

*Caleb Wygant* 11/15/24

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Caleb Wygant, President, Project Hope Board of Directors Date

*Caren Rodriguez* 11/15/24

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Caren Rodriguez, Lead Community Center Teacher Date