



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction

Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child asserts a child's right to protection 'from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has care of the child.'

Child abuse and exploitation occur throughout the world and in all societies, and involve the physical, sexual, emotional abuse and/or neglect of children and adolescents. The Academy endorses the principles and articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and is committed to supporting and respecting children's rights and protecting children from harm. The Academy takes its responsibility to protect children from all forms of violence very seriously and will not tolerate any form of abuse or exploitation of children in the programs of the Academy. **Our responsibility to protect Children from abuse places clear expectations on every member of the Academy community and obliges us to act in the best interests of Children at all times, including preventing abuse, reporting suspected abuse, and creating a child friendly environment.**

All Academy personnel have the power to keep Children safe and promote the kind of safe environment that all Children deserve. The nature of abuse is that it often requires secrecy, isolation, and limiting access to support resources. By proactively establishing clear standards; communicating available resources; fostering high expectations for personnel; setting appropriate boundaries; and respectfully observing and listening to the Children in our care, we seek to create an environment in which children can thrive.

Definitions

This child protection policy and any associated guidelines reflect the definitions below:

A Child (or Children) is defined under this policy as **any person, of either sex, who is enrolled in an Academy programme** including the 2 year Programme, SEGL at ALA, Global Scholars Program, Model African Union, or any other camps. A child is also defined as anyone on ALA premises who is or appears to be under the age of 18 years.

Best Interests of the Child¹: The *principle of best interests* applies to all actions concerning Children and requires active measures to protect their rights. These measures should promote Children's survival, growth, and well-being, and support and assist parents and other caregivers to realize Children's rights. This includes Child participation to ensure that the opinions of Children are heard in matters affecting them.

Child Protection: The responsibility, actions and measures taken to prevent and respond to abuse, exploitation and violence against Children.

Child Abuse: Includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect/failure to provide, emotional maltreatment, peer to peer abuse, and exploitation of Children;

Physical abuse is the deliberate application of force to any part of a Child's body, which results or may result in a non-accidental harm or injury to the Child. Physical abuse may include shaking, choking, biting, kicking, burning, poisoning, holding a Child under water, or any other harmful or dangerous use of force or restraint.

¹ Best Interests of the Child is one of the four guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. See also, 'General Comment No. 7, International Human Rights Instruments', HRI/GEN/1/Rev.8/Add.1, (United Nations, June 2007), 7.



Sexual Grooming² is "a process by which a person prepares a child, significant adults and the environment for the abuse of the child". Grooming can happen online, in organisations and in public. Signs a child is being groomed include:

- sudden changes in behaviour
- going missing from home or school
- secretive use of technology
- having unexplained gifts
- alcohol and/or drug misuse
- having a much older 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend'
- developing sexual health problems
- mental health problems

What makes children vulnerable to grooming?

Grooming can affect any child. However, children who may be particularly vulnerable include:

- children who are exploring their sexuality and identity online
- those who are experiencing difficulties with peers, including social and communication problems
- children with low self-esteem and confidence (those who want to be liked)
- children who have limited awareness about online risks (they may not recognise 'stranger danger' in the online world and they may see all online contacts as friends)
- those whose online activity isn't appropriately supervised or monitored

Sexual abuse occurs when an adult or youth uses a Child for sexual purposes. Sexual abuse includes fondling, intercourse, incest, sodomy, exhibitionism, and commercial exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials. Sexual abuse may include, but is not limited to, permitting, encouraging or requiring a Child to engage in any of the following activities if they occur between an Organization's personnel and a Child:

- using or engaging in sexually provocative language, acts or conduct towards a Child;
- rough-housing or engaging in conduct which involves physical contact with a Child and which is sexually suggestive in nature;
- kissing, fondling, caressing, patting or pinching a Child or engaging in sexual intercourse or other sexual conduct designed to sexually stimulate either the Organization's personnel or the Child or both;
- using sexual remarks, jokes, innuendo or taunting about a Child's body or sexual orientation or uttering, either verbally or in writing, invitations, requests or sexually suggestive remarks or displaying pornographic or sexually suggestive material to a Child;
- conduct of a sexual nature for the stimulation, gratification, profit and self-interest of an Organization's personnel who is in a position of trust or authority or with whom the Child is in a relationship of dependency; and/or
- prostitution or production of material of a pornographic nature, including soliciting sexually suggestive photos or seeking compromising pictures, or sending sexually suggestive photos or compromising pictures, whether through email, instant messaging and other social media platforms or any other means.

Neglect/failure to provide is a form of abuse that occurs when legal guardians or caregivers (including personnel operating *in loco parentis* at ALA programs) do not provide the requisite attention to the Child's emotional, psychological, or physical development when they have the means, knowledge and access to services to do so; or fail to protect the Child from exposure to danger.

² National Society for the Protection of Children from Cruelty



Emotional abuse involves acts or omissions by legal guardians or caregivers (including personnel operating *in loco parentis* at ALA programs) that cause or could cause serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders. Emotional maltreatment can include verbal threats, socially isolating a Child, intimidation, exploitation, terrorizing, or routinely making unreasonable demands on a Child.

Exploitation refers to situations whereby an abuser takes advantage of unequal power and/or economic status of a Child for personal gain. Exploitation occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a Child into unwanted activity (a) in exchange for something the Child needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. Exploitation may occur even if the activity appears consensual, and may occur through the use of technology. We note that all relationships between ALA personnel and Children have an unequal power dynamic, placing a clear burden on all staff to set appropriate boundaries.

Peer to peer abuse³ is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control exercised between Children, and within Children's relationships (both intimate and non- intimate), friendships, and wider peer associations. Peer-to-peer abuse can take various forms, including (but not limited to): serious bullying (including cyberbullying) as defined below, relationship abuse, domestic violence and abuse, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour and/or prejudice-based violence including, but not limited to, gender-based violence. Incidents or suspicions of peer to peer abuse place the same obligations on ALA personnel to report, and will be managed through processes that are consistent with the guidelines provided in this policy. Differences in gender and sexuality are often prevalent in questions of peer to peer abuse.

Bullying is verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons. To be considered bullying, the behaviour must include an imbalance of power: an individual or several individuals deliberately use their power - such as physical stature, access to embarrassing information, popularity, or seniority – to control or harm others. Bullying may include repetitive incidents with the same individuals or different individuals. Bullying can happen anywhere: at school, travelling to and from school, on sporting teams or other group activities, in the workplace, and on the Internet.

Cyberbullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies. This includes cell phones, computers, tablets, social media sites, websites, texts and chat. Children who are cyberbullied are often, but not always, bullied in person as well. Children who are cyberbullied may have more difficulty escaping the behaviour.

- Cyberbullying can happen 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and can reach a child even when she or he is alone.
- Cyberbullying images and messages can be posted anonymously and quickly distributed to a wide audience. It can be difficult or even impossible to trace the source.
- Deleting inappropriate or harassing messages, texts and pictures can be extremely difficult after they have been posted or sent.

Indicators of Child Abuse that ALA personnel can watch for to recognize Child Abuse may include but are not limited to the following:

Physical signs, such as:

- Lacerations and bruises, bites, cuts, burns
- Nightmares

³ Farrer & Co. (2019). *Safeguarding: Peer-on-peer abuse toolkit*. [Source](#)



- Irritation, pain, or injury in the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Discomfort when sitting
- Torn or bloody underclothing
- Venereal disease

Behavioural signs, such as:

- Anxiety when approaching the Organization's premises or a room used for Programs with Children
- Nervous or hostile behaviour towards adults
- Acting out of sexual behaviour
- Withdrawal from activities and friends
- Not willing to see the school nurse or go to the doctor
- Arms and legs are covered on hot days
- Strange reasons given for injuries

Verbal signs, such as the following statements:

- I don't like (insert name).
- (Insert name) does things to me when we are alone.
- (Insert name) makes me uncomfortable.
- (Insert name) is creepy.
- (Insert name) gave/offered me a gift.
- I don't like to be alone with (insert name).
- (Insert name) fooled around with me.

Guidelines for Child Protection and Safeguarding

i. Prevention

The Academy takes measures to address risk factors and prevent abuse and exploitation before it occurs. Prevention measures include organizational policies, procedures and codes of conduct for protecting children; capacity building for all those who work with children; awareness raising and good practice for minimizing the risks to children.

ii. Screening Procedures

All personnel (including employees, contractors, campus residents, and unpaid volunteers) undergo screening procedures in an effort to prevent abuse and exploitation. These procedures include a certificate of good conduct; police reference checks or equivalent; verification that applicants are not listed in national registries of child offenders; a detailed application and interview process; and references who support the applicant's suitability to work with Children. Any certificate of good conduct, police reference check or equivalent that is obtained will be updated by the Organization at least every three years.

iii. Acknowledgement

Each individual who wishes to work at African Leadership Academy or be a member of the extended community is required to sign an acknowledgment form confirming that he/she agrees to comply with this Child Protection Policy of African Leadership Academy, including the Organization's expectations to prevent abuse, report suspected abuse, and create a safe environment. Disciplinary action will be taken against anyone found guilty of violating this policy.

iv. Awareness

African Leadership Academy ensures that all personnel and members of the extended African Leadership Academy community, sub-contractors, consultants or affiliates involved with Children's programs are aware of child protection



risks, policies and procedures; including national laws and international instruments, as applicable. African Leadership Academy also makes its Child Protection Policy and commitment publicly available on its website.

v. Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination

African Leadership Academy ensures that all Child protection policies and procedures take into account gender equality and non-discrimination requirements and the high expectations of our institutional values. We recognize that cisgender females, cisgender males and any student that identifies as LGBTQ+ may face different risks relating to their safety and protection. All Children have the equal right to protection, irrespective of race; colour; sex; language; gender identification; sexuality; sexual orientation; disability; religion; political or other opinions; national, social or indigenous origin; property; birth or other status.

vi. Capacity Building

The Academy develops the capacity of all who work with and for Children to appropriately prevent, detect and respond to Child abuse and exploitation as reflected in these Guidelines. Efforts are made to ensure organizational policies and practices are understood and can be effectively implemented through on-going training courses for all employees and volunteers and other personnel of the Academy. All personnel must attend an annual refresher course on the child protection policy as a condition of employment.

vii. Participation of Children

Children must be actively, meaningfully and ethically involved in all aspects of preventing, responding and monitoring incidents of abuse and exploitation. Children must not be treated as simply objects of concern but rather listened to and taken seriously and treated as individual people with their own views. Children will be made aware of the existence of this policy and the guidelines within this policy at least once per school year, with a training within one week of a student's arrival on campus.

viii. Reporting Mechanisms for Children and Staff

Established mechanisms enable Children to safely report any concerns relating to their well-being, safety and protection. Children should be aware of the mechanisms available to them and services should be confidential, Child friendly and accessible to Children. The Academy's personnel and students should be able to identify Child protection concerns and professionally report them, taking into account the best interests of the Child.

Where there is any reason to suspect a violation of this policy, the Academy's personnel must report the suspected abuse to the Chief Executive Officer, Dean of the Academy, Head of Global Programs, or Chief People Officer, which will trigger an investigation of the allegation. Such a report may be made via telephonic or in-person conversation or through an email to one of these individuals or to ombud@africanleadershipacademy.org. The identity of the reporter will, where possible, remain confidential in the investigative process, and the trained individual receiving the report will place the report under the Responsible Officer appointed by the Board of Trustees to ensure compliance with the processes defined in this policy and related documents.

The Responsible Officer will work with the appropriate governmental authorities, law enforcement agencies, and parent(s) / legal guardian(s) or caregivers of abused Children in accordance with the laws of the applicable country.

ix. Response and Follow Up

The Academy's policies and procedures include appropriate measures to support and protect Children when concerns arise. All measures taken to respond to abuse or exploitation shall respect Children's rights, local laws and take into account the best interests of the Child and endeavour to ensure no further harm comes to the Child as a result of any



actions taken by the Academy. Efforts to work in conjunction with other service providers, specialists, parents, legal guardians, caregivers and others will be explored when appropriate.

After any incident or report of abuse and exploitation, proper measures will be taken to ensure organizational learning, evaluation and follow up. Any individual who confidentially reports suspected abuse should expect to receive an update regarding the outcome of any investigation from the Responsible Officer within two weeks of the initiation of the report. Out of respect for rights of all parties involved in the matter, there may be limits to what is shared back to initial reporter. This feedback loop is an important component of the Response and Follow-up Procedure, and a reporter is encouraged to contact the Responsible Officer directly if an update has not been communicated within two weeks.

The Academy will retain written records of all reports of Child Abuse, including, but not limited to the date of the report and the date of the alleged abuse, the name and address of the Child and his/her parent(s) / legal guardian(s), the name of the Academy personnel who made the report, the person it was reported to the name of the governmental contact to whom the report was made, if applicable, and a clear description of the facts that led to the report, as well as any other available information. The Academy should advise its insurance provider of the complaint of Child Abuse and retain records of any such reports.

All such records will be kept within the files of the Academy and its legal counsel in accordance with the Academy's privacy and confidentiality policies.

x. Implementation, Monitoring and Review

The implementation and monitoring of the Child Protection Policy for the Academy is designated to the Chief Executive Officer and the HR Manager. These persons have a duty to review the policy at regular intervals, each year. Each of these periodic reviews will include a review and approval by the appropriate subcommittee of the Academy's Board of Trustees.

xi. Sanction and Discipline of Organization Personnel

Where an allegation is made that an Academy's personnel has violated the expectations of this Child Protection Policy, the accused personnel will be immediately suspended from all duties with the Academy (with pay, if applicable) while the incident is investigated. Where personnel is found to have committed Child Abuse, the said personnel will be immediately terminated with cause from his or her position. Where personnel is terminated as an employee or volunteer, such personnel should not be permitted to enter onto the Academy's premises or participate in activities of the Academy following termination.

When an allegation is made that a member of the extended community (i.e. a contractor or visitor) has violated the Child Protection Policy, that individual should be removed from campus immediately and/or banned from entering campus and communicating with students to prevent further harm. Where such a person is found to have committed Child Abuse, the said personnel should be immediately terminated with cause from his or her position.

When an allegation is made that a student has committed peer-to-peer abuse, the student disciplinary process should be initiated according to the guidelines in the Students and Parents Handbook.

xii. Expectation of Non-Retaliation

All members of the Academy community, including personnel and students, are expected to report conduct or allegations they believe could represent a violation of this policy or our commitment to Child safety. Acts of retaliation by ALA personnel toward individuals, whether personnel or students, who have reported issues that they in good faith believe are of concern in the manner described in this policy are expressly forbidden and will result in



disciplinary action. We recognize that any threat or act of retaliation could have the effect of limiting future reporting and undermining our commitment to Child safeguarding, and we maintain a strict commitment to non-retaliation.

xiii. Informed Consent

The Academy should provide Children and their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) with all necessary details to make an informed decision regarding their participation in programs and activities, including any voice recordings, video or photographs of children. Children and their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) should understand how their images may be used and be supported to identify and evaluate any associated risks. Personal information and/or images of Children should only be used after informed consent has been obtained in writing from both the Child and his/her parent(s)/legal guardian(s).

xiv. Protection of Personal Information

Personal information regarding any Child or Children, whether such information is obtained as part of the programs involving Children, should not be disclosed to any third party, except in accordance with the policies of the Organization or as required by applicable local laws. Personal information includes, but is not limited to, any information that can be linked to a Child or used to identify a Child.

xv. Support for any Child or Children that has reported a Child Protection Policy violation

In the event that a child has suffered harm from a violation of a policy (whether by a peer or an adult) they can expect to be protected from further harm and traumatization.

Code of Conduct for Academy Personnel

Personnel should avoid any behaviour or conduct that compromises the safety and protection of Children within its activities, operations and programs. **These guidelines govern our interactions with children for the duration of their Academy program and for twenty-four months after a student's graduation from the Diploma Program and/or completion of secondary education.**⁴

African Leadership Academy Personnel MUST:

Prevent Child Abuse

- Identify potential risks to the safety of children and take appropriate action so as to minimize risks
- Create an environment where concerns can easily and safely be raised and discussed
- Recognize and remedy potential situations which may lead to violent acts against Children
- Comply with Academy Policies, such as (but not limited to) the Chaperone policy, which are designed to prevent potential abuse and protect Children

Create a Safe Environment for Children

- Contribute to an environment where Children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concerns and rights
- Ensure that Children are aware of their rights, policies and resources which are available to them in the Academy community, such as (but not limited to) wellness services
- Work with Children to define what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour with adults
- Watch for signs of peer-to-peer Abuse, such as harassment, bullying, or unhealthy relationships

Set Appropriate Boundaries with Children

⁴ These time-bound restrictions also cover any children who are dismissed from Academy programs.



Boundaries⁵ are a declaration of expectations and an agreed upon way of working; they are created for the safety and security of children and the adults they work with. ALA personnel should:

- Keep and model professional hours. As a general rule, engagement in evenings should reflect our setting boundaries consistent with our professional roles. While correspondence to a class, a Resfac activity on the hall, a posting on Canvas, or a structured tutoring program may be appropriate after 7pm, an extended casual conversation can blur the boundaries between staff and student. In the case of after-hours emergencies, students should be directed to the staff or faculty member on duty, the Administrator on Duty, or to an adult with the appropriate expertise to help with the emergency.
- Maintain appropriate staff/faculty-student relationships. ALA personnel are reminded that children are not their friends, given the power dynamic at play. Conversations should not be overly familiar, and should not blur the line between student and the staff member; for example, ALA personnel should avoid 'gossip' conversations that are demeaning to another student or ALA personnel.
- Avoid creating perceptions of favoritism, such as giving gifts or offering favors that they would not reasonably provide to others in the community.
- Use appropriate platforms for conversation. ALA personnel should only carry out electronic conversations with students on Academy email or other platforms explicitly approved for this purpose by the organisation. If a child initiates a personal conversation via WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, Facebook or a similar social media platform, the staff member should end the conversation immediately and direct students to the appropriate organizational messaging platform.

Report and Respond Immediately to Any Suspected Case of Child Abuse

- Report any child abuse or protection concerns to the Chief Executive Officer, Dean of the Academy, Head of Global Programs, or Chief People Officer, or via email to ombud@africanleadershipacademy.org. This report will be treated confidentially and trigger appropriate responsive action.
- Take appropriate actions to prevent any imminent harm to the Child.
- Ensure the Child and, if appropriate, his/her parents or guardians, are well-informed and participate in the decision-making and any agreed intervention.

How to respond if a Child discloses a suspected case of abuse:

- Stay calm and neutral
- Believe the child and offer support
- Listen without asking leading questions: let them explain in their own words
- Acknowledge the Child's feelings or emotions
- Be honest and careful in making promises: describe the actions that you can and will take
- Explain that it is your duty to tell someone else to get the Child the help that they need
- Take action, as required in terms of this Policy, and follow up with the Child and/or the Child's parents and/or the senior member of staff, as appropriate

African Leadership Academy Personnel MUST NEVER:

- 1) Abuse or exploit a Child or behave in any way that places a Child at risk of harm.
- 2) Exchange money, Gifts, employment, goods or services for sex with a Child, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior, or any other behaviour that could be deemed exploitative of a Child.
- 3) Accept quid-pro-quo gifts from a Child, and declare any gifts exceeding 200 Rand from a child. If an employee receives a gift that is valued above 200 Rand, that gift should be declared to their line manager.

⁵ *One Trusted Adult* by Brooklyn Raney



- 4) Have a Child they are working with stay overnight at their home unsupervised (should a supervised overnight stay take place, personnel are expected to follow the guidelines issued by the Dean's Office).
- 5) Sleep in the same room or bed with a Child
- 6) Do things for Children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves
- 7) Offend, insult, humiliate or degrade children or perpetrate any form of emotional abuse in their presence or absence.
- 8) Discriminate or provide favourable treatment to one Child
- 9) Kiss or coaxing a child to kiss organizational personnel
- 10) Engage in extended hugging, tickling or coaxing of a Child to hug the organizational personnel
- 11) Touch a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit.
- 12) Have a child sit on the lap of organizational personnel.
- 13) Have a member of the organizational personnel sit on the lap of a child
- 14) Be alone with a Child in an unobservable place or room, or in a room with no windows. Personnel must endeavor to have meetings with students in a semi private place, (such as the office, meeting rooms or classrooms) or with the door open and the lights on during the meeting.
- 15) Engage in prolonged physical contact with a Child.
- 16) Discipline a Child using any form of physical contact, or emotional or psychological pressure, abuse or intimidation.
- 17) Retaliate against or threaten any student or member of personnel who has reported a potential violation of the Child Protection Policy.
- 18) Offer alcohol, tobacco or any other recreational or medicinal substance to a Child on or off campus unless within the purview of appropriate medical care.

The above is neither an exhaustive nor exclusive list and the Academy should and will consider all related actions and behaviour which *may* compromise the rights and protection of Children. The adjudication of all matters related to this policy will reflect the spirit of the Child Protection Policy and the impact of willful actions on Children and their sense of physical, psychological, and emotional safety.