

RPC Child Protection Policy*

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Introduction

The Rural Poultry Centre has a zero tolerance approach to child exploitation or abuse. RPC recognises that it is the shared responsibility of all adults to prevent child exploitation and abuse.

This Child Protection Policy is based on principles and articulates expectations of all RPC personnel in the management of child protection risks.

Scope

This policy applies to all RPC personnel, including:

- staff employed by RPC;
- consultants, advisers and contractors engaged in RPC activities, and their respective personnel;
- RPC volunteers;
- partner institutions participating in RPC activities.

* **Endorsed** by RPC Board on: 8 Feb 2024
Due for review: 8 Feb 2029
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Safeguarding Principles

The broad principles under which RPC manages the risks of child exploitation and abuse can be summarised as follows:

1 Zero tolerance of child exploitation and abuse

RPC maintains a zero tolerance¹ approach to child exploitation and abuse. Child exploitation and abuse will attract criminal, civil and disciplinary sanctions.

RPC will not knowingly engage - directly or indirectly - anyone who poses a risk to children.

RPC works to minimise the risks of child exploitation and abuse associated with its functions and programs, and trains its staff and partners on their obligations under this policy.

2 Assessing and managing child protection risks and impacts

The risks of child exploitation and abuse are real. However, careful management strategies can identify, mitigate, manage or reduce the risks to children that may be associated with RPC's activities and programs.

3 Sharing responsibility for child protection

To effectively manage risks to children, RPC requires the commitment, support and cooperation of partner organisations and individuals who help to deliver its programs.

4 Procedural fairness

RPC will apply procedural fairness when making decisions that affect a person's rights or interests and when responding to concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse. It will carefully apply and maintain appropriate confidentiality in following up any complaints or reports.

5 Recognition of the best interests of the child

In all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

1 "Zero tolerance" means that *all* allegations or reports of impropriety involving RPC personnel *will be followed up* and investigated to determine whether further action is warranted.

Elements of RPC's Child Protection Policy

In order to apply the above principles, RPC adopts the following procedures, rules and requirements. These standards are based on widely recognised minimum standards for Child Protection for NGOs such as RPC.

1 Maintenance of a Child Protection Policy

That is, a living policy which is recognised and reflected in this document, which is publicly available and is reviewed at least every five years.

2 A documented reporting procedure

RPC maintains a documented reporting procedure for child exploitation and abuse allegations, code of conduct and policy non-compliance. Our employment contracts contain clauses explicitly stating the priority given to child protection, including available sanctions for breaches. The current focal person for child protection issues (name, phone and email address) is publicly available and easily accessed.

3 Training for personnel

RPC maintains child protection training materials appropriate for its work and undertakes training of its staff and relevant downstream partners before beginning any activities. It maintains a register of such trainings and refresher training.

4 Commitment to prevention

RPC is committed to comprehensive efforts in the interests of Child Protection. (Refer RPC Recruitment Policy). RPC maintains a commitment to preventing a person from working with children if they pose an unacceptable risk. This is reflected in RPC's employment contracts and other public policies and documents.

5 Regular review of the Child Protection Policy

RPC's Child Protection Policy is subject to regular review by its staff and Board of Trustees, at least every five years, or earlier if needed. The relevant dates are recorded within the policy document.

6 Assume a Risk Based Approach

RPC applies a risk-based approach to the management of child protection in its activities. For any given activity a risk assessment includes a decision on whether the activity involves:

- working with children
- contact with children
- no contact with children.

An assessment of child protection risk must be conducted if the activity involves either of the first two. The risk assessment must include identification of potential risks and risk management measures appropriate for the level of risk identified.

7 Recruitment and engagement contracts

RPC's employment contracts contain provisions for suspension or transfer to other duties of any employee who is under investigation and provisions to dismiss any employee after an investigation.

8 Levels of risk

For activities involving contact (including potential contact) with children, RPC maintains robust screening procedures for all personnel involved. In accordance with RPC's recruitment policy:

Recruitment and selection of personnel in contact with children (that is most of RPC's staff positions and contractors) will entail thorough assessment of relevant risks. Interviews will be conducted for all positions, preferably face to face. All interviewees will be required to provide proof of identity - photo ID is required such as national ID card, passport or current driver's licence. Applicants will be asked to disclose whether they have been charged with child exploitation offences. Criminal record checks and verbal referee checks will be conducted on selected personnel before engagement. For any position that is working directly with children, additional checks will be undertaken.

For positions involving working with children, further screening measures (such as interview plans that incorporate behaviour-based interview questions) are used. Checks will cover all locations where the individual has worked over the past 5 years.

9 Conform with internationally recognised standards

RPC's child protection code of conduct strives to meet the minimum standard set by DFAT², and hence these nine standards closely reflect those standards.

² The Australian government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which supports and funds some RPC programs.

Child Protection - Standards of Professional Behaviour

RPC promotes the highest standards of ethics in respect of child protection.

All RPC personnel are required to adhere to the following rules when dealing directly with children (excluding where applicable the person's own child(ren)³), and in doing so take responsibility for ensuring they do not place themselves in a position where they risk allegations being made against them. These standards form part of specific training given to RPC personnel on engagement, or by way of refresher training at other times.

All RPC personnel are encouraged to understand that the onus is on them to use common sense, and avoid actions or behaviours that could be construed as child exploitation and abuse. They must also understand their responsibility in the course of their work to immediately report any suspected cases of child abuse to RPC management.

All staff, subcontractors, volunteers and partners of RPC are required to:

- treat children with respect, dignity and reasonable compassion, in an equitable and fair manner, and with proper regard for their rights and obligations, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, ethnic or social origin, property, birth or other status, or disability;
- not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;
- not engage children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services or acts;
- wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children;
- not invite unaccompanied children into their home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger or have been granted permission from their guardian/parent;
- not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case they must obtain their supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible;
- not use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media inappropriately, and never exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material through any medium;
- not use physical punishment on children;
- not give or provide children with alcohol or illegal drugs;
- not show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention;
- not hire children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury;
- comply with all relevant legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour;
- immediately report concerns or allegations of child abuse in accordance with appropriate procedures;
- disclose without delay all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during their association with RPC, and which relate to child exploitation or abuse;

³ These behaviours are not intended to interfere with normal family interactions.

When photographing or filming a child for work related purposes, all personnel must:

- assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming a child;
- obtain informed consent from the child and parent or guardian of the child before photographing or filming a child; as part of this they must explain how the photograph or film will be used;
- ensure photographs and videos present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner: children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive;
- ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts; and
- ensure file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form.

Related documents

- RPC Code of Conduct
- RPC Recruitment Policy
- RPC Policy on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH)
- RPC Guidelines Regarding Complaints or Grievances

Acknowledgement Form:

This acknowledgement form must be signed by the person engaged, detached from the body of the Code and kept on the RPC personnel file for the employee.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Rural Poultry Centre's Child Protection Policy and that I have read and understood the documents. I have an understanding of the organisation and its expectations in terms of standards of conduct in the context of the position to which I have been assigned.

Full Name	
Signature	
Date	
Position	
Supervisor/manager	