

Code of Conduct for Child Safety

Introduction

The safety and well-being of children are paramount in Inter American School's guidelines and policies. IAS strives to be an authentic Christian community with a positive school atmosphere where children are cared for in a way that allows them to reach their full potential.

Having a code of conduct and a set of expectations will not only protect the students of IAS but also the adults interacting with IAS students. These expectations will allow an adult's interactions to be transparent and less likely to be interpreted incorrectly. Adults working with IAS assume the full burden of setting and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in their interactions with children.

Inter American School is a member of The Child Safety and Protection Network. IAS has worked to create clear guidelines and a fair and thorough child inquiry assessment. IAS will abide by Guatemala's laws with child abuse. When local laws are found to be more prescriptive than IAS policy, the local law will be followed.

In all situations with children, we should use as many of the following Best Practices and Code of Conduct principles as possible. Our intent is to be vigilant in our standards regarding child safety to protect our children from abuse.

1. Best Practices

a. Visibility

All work with children should be planned in a way where adults are visible to other adults when working with children.

This can be accomplished through planning activities in areas where other adults are present, having windows on classrooms and offices and keeping doors open when possible.

b. Overcoming Isolation

Isolation can be overcome by avoiding being alone with one child. It is recommended that adults avoid being in bathrooms alone with children and adults that are given rides are accompanied by other children or adults.

An appropriate number of adults should supervise school events, especially overnight activities.

c. Accountability

All IAS staff are expected to interact with children in a mature, capable, safe, caring and responsible manner. All staff are responsible for giving and accepting feedback from others about interactions with children.

When service involves one-on-one contact, these aspects of accountability should be followed, when applicable:

- i. Always be accountable to other adults regarding your interactions with children.
- ii. Parents and/or supervisors are to be notified beforehand of any activities with children.
- iii. Counseling or other confidential meetings with children should be done in a place where the adult and child are visible to others. Such as in an office with a window and when another adult is in the area.
- iv. In an emergency situation, where an adult is supervising a child alone, find an additional person to be involved if possible or notify parents.
- v. Adults, should monitor each other in the area of physical contact and provide feedback when anything may be misinterpreted.

d. Balancing Power and Control

When working with children, balance the age, size, strength, power and authority between staff and children to lower the risk. For instance, when talking to a student have another student in the proximity.

e. Supervision

Supervision reduces risk. IAS administrators should periodically and randomly visit classrooms, offices, work areas and other areas where children and adults are together.

f. Differential Treatment

Adults should avoid showing differential treatment to particular children as well as avoid excluding children in an embarrassing way in front of others.

2. Code of Conduct

a. Technology

Technology should be used appropriately to protect children from abuse and exploitation. Filters can be used to prevent individuals from showing inappropriate internet content to children.

b. Discipline

Discipline should be used to teach and correct rather than punish. The following actions may involve inappropriate ways of discipline or approach physical or emotional abuse and should be avoided: derogatory name-calling, ridicule, humiliation or shaming,

publicly singling out a child for negative treatment or exclusion, yelling at (loud speech that harms by bringing emotional degradation) or belittling a child or other forms of rejecting treatment. Other behaviors that should be avoided are: hitting or any behavior that assaults a child and pushing or holding a child against their will outside the goals of protecting them from danger, providing medical care or helping them from harming themselves or others. Physical discipline by a parent of their own children, such as spanking is not considered abuse as long as it is reasonable, not done in anger and causes no bodily injury to the child.

c. Touch

Healthy, caring touch is valuable to children but unhealthy touch is abusive. Therefore, the following guidelines apply:

- i. Keep everything public.
- ii. Touch should be in the response to the need of the child and not the need of the adult.
- iii. Children have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others. Any requests to end physical contact should be respected.
- iv. Avoid any physical activity that is, or may be thought to be, sexually stimulating to the child or adult.
- v. Touch should be open rather than secretive. A hug in front of others is very different than a hug behind closed doors.
- vi. Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the adult. It should be with the child's permission and resistance should be respected unless the child is in need of medical attention or for the safety of others.
- vii. Touch should always communicate respect for the child. Adults should avoid doing things of a personal nature for children that they are able to do for themselves (dressing, bathing etc.).

The following signs of affection are generally appropriate: verbal praise, side hugs or shoulder to shoulder hugs and high fives. For younger children, touching their hands, shoulders, arms and hugs are generally appropriate.

The following behaviors are inappropriate and should not be engaged in: touching buttocks, chests, genital areas, or thighs; showing affection in isolated areas or when alone with a child, sleeping with a child not your own or lying on a bed with a child that is not your own; flirtatious or seductive looks; any form of affection unwanted by the child; sexually-suggestive or explicit language; showing sexually suggestive pictures, games or videos; any behavior that could be interpreted as sexual in nature.

d. Verbal Interaction

Adults should use words to support and encourage a child. This includes praise, positive reinforcement and appropriate jokes. Inappropriate verbal interaction includes the following: shaming, belittling, humiliating, name calling, using harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate the child, cursing or making derogatory remarks about the child or place of origin. Inappropriate verbal interaction also includes inappropriate comments about physique or body development, telling sexual jokes, making sexually suggestive comments, telling inappropriate secrets or inappropriately discussing sexual encounters or desires with children.

A. Child Care Guidelines

1. Training, Supervision and Accountability

The most careful screening procedures are not flawless therefore, it is imperative that IAS make it as difficult as possible for any abuse to take place. This involves training, supervision and accountability in the IAS community.

a. Training

All staff will complete training of Sexual Abuse before or within the first month of working in the classroom with students. This includes:

- i. completing the sexual abuse awareness training with Ministry Safe online
- ii. discussion of the Code of Conduct and Best Practices during Staff Orientation
- iii. explanation of accountability and of mandatory reporting procedures.

b. Supervision and Accountability

Supervisors (including the director and principal) of Teachers and Staff at IAS must:

- i. Ensure that the location and facilities in which staff work with children are appropriate.
- ii. Ensure that the ratio of adults to students is appropriate across grade levels and classes.
- iii. Promote an atmosphere where:
 - a. Students know which adults to approach if they have concerns about any aspect of safety.
 - b. Adults will listen carefully and sensitively to the concerns of the students.
 - c. Allegations of any abuse are dealt with seriously and fairly.
 - d. Any staff members that experience temptation or feel they are in stressful situations know they can ask for help.

Inter American School's Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Form

I acknowledge that I have read the above Code of Conduct for Child Safety, agree to abide by it and have attended IAS' training in Child Safety Awareness and Prevention.

I declare that I have not engaged in sexual abuse, physical abuse, any pattern of emotional abuse or neglect of a child. If I have engaged in any of these abusive actions, they have been reported to the director and I have finished appropriate follow-up.

I declare that I have never been the subject of a complaint, disciplinary action, or dismissal by an employer, church, ministry or other organization following an allegation of any child abuse acts.

I understand my responsibility to report abuse and other inappropriate behavior toward a child immediately to the director, principal or school counselor.

I understand that IAS takes all child abuse allegations seriously.

I understand that any abuse in any form is not tolerated by IAS.

I understand that IAS will cooperate with the necessary authorities in the investigation of any report of abuse.

I have read the above acknowledgement form and agree to the above statements.

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

This acknowledgement is to be updated yearly for all staff members whose work involves interaction with children. It is the responsibility of the director to ensure all staff sign this form.