

HAPPY DAYS & FREEDOM HIGH SCHOOL

“Where Every Student is Important”



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

This policy was created based on an international format available on the website of the International Center for Lost and Exploited Children -ICMEC for its acronym in English (International Center for Missing and Exploited Children).

We would like to thank and acknowledge the following sources:

- The work of the International Special Task Force on Child Protection (ITFCP *)
- The CIS / NEASC accreditation agencies in the recommendation of standards for the protection of children and youth.
- Background research practices and other recommendations provided by the recruitment committee of the International Special Unit on Child Protection.
- The educational portal checklist and the resource summary of the International Center for Lost and Exploited Children -ICMEC (<https://www.icmec.org/education-portal/>).

*The work of the International Special Unit for Child Protection (ITFCP) has been carried out by the coalition of more than 90 volunteers, leaders of international educational organizations, school leaders, counselors, administrative and safety managers, teachers, school accreditations, inspection and recruitment professionals, who have worked collaboratively with dedicated police officers and the medical community. It has been thanks to this extensive collaboration and the diversity of perspectives from a variety of roles that have

enriched discussions and results. Since its origins in May 2014, its mission has been to apply its collective resources, experience, and collaboration to help international educational communities to face the challenges of child and youth protection.

OUR MISSION

To facilitate the ideal spaces, tools, strategies, and innovative educational practices, to develop the potential of our students and to prepare them successfully to continue their education; Improving their quality of life.

OUR VISION 2024

Our students demonstrate ethical leadership, with a global mentality, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility; being able to collaborate, communicate, create, and think critically.

Table of contents: key components of policies and programs

This policy addresses the following key components (and related procedures) in relation to the protection of children and youth:

I. Introduction, purpose, and essential communications.

II Policies and procedures of Happy Days & Freedom High School (HDF).

III. Summary of key responsibilities and applicability.

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V. Terms of important policies, definitions, and indicators.

VI. Notification of incidents, suspicions, and follow-up procedures.

I. Introduction, purpose, and essential communications.

At Happy Days & Freedom High School (HDF) we want our students to have the best educational experience, to be free from any type of intimidation, neglect, or abuse of any kind. In this regard, and in accordance with the core values and mission statement of our school, the HDF administration has adopted a Child and Youth Protection Policy to guide our staff and families in matters related to health, safety, and care of students who attend our school. This policy will be presented to the entire educational community at the beginning of each school year and will be reinforced as necessary. The HDF Child and Youth Protection Policy is based on international law policy and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in which Honduras is also a signatory, as well as local children's rights law, particularly the Law of Integral Protection for Children and Adolescents established in the Code of Children and Adolescents DECREE No. 73-96. As a result of the acceptance and enrollment of a student in HDF, our parents, as well as other members of the community who have contact with our students, agree to work in partnership with the school to comply with the policies adopted by the HDF administration. We want the entire HDF educational community to know that we value our students, therefore we provide the security and care required by our students during their remain in the facilities during operation hours and

attention to the educational community. Reason why HDF supports students with this Protection Policy that defines the standards by which all HDF students should be treated. Every HDF student must be treated with respect and dignity by all who make up our educational community.

Educational Components of HDFS Child and Youth Protection Policy.

As part of our overall educational programs and specific to our shared responsibility to educate children, to protect them, and to learn and grow in a safe environment, HDF will:

- 1) Provide age-appropriate lessons for all grade levels to help students understand personal safety, needs, and rights.
- 2) Provide parent materials and information sessions to help parents better understand our programs and policy.
- 3) Annually train faculty and staff to recognize and report issues of abuse and neglect.

We will work together with parents and other community members to ensure that our students are safe and are knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities to themselves and each other so that they can grow and learn free of fear in a safe and supportive environment.

Any member of the school community is invited to contact the safeguarding lead, the level counselor, or principal regarding any specific questions they may have.

Level Counselor:

Preschool & Elementary

Mrs. Aracely Valdez: avaldez@happydaysfreedom.com

High School

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Level Psychologist:

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High School

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Level Principal:

Preschool & Elementary

Mrs. Wendy Sandoval: wsandoval@happydaysfreedom.com

High School

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SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Luis Chavez: lchavez@happydaysfreedom.com

II. HDF'S corresponding policies and Procedures

HDF'S policies and procedures approved by the Board of Trustees that speak to the key components for the implementation of the school's Child and Youth Protection Policy as contained in this document and the school's related or more detailed safety framework/program is referenced as follows:

Child and Youth Protection Policies & Reporting Requirements

HDF aims to ensure that all students are given a safe learning environment by maintaining appropriate practices and supervision in the school.

The school will establish appropriate procedures to ensure proper reporting of suspected child abuse which may have occurred in or out of school. Such reporting is the responsibility of any employee who suspects that a child/youth may have been abused and must also include provisions for self-reporting of abuse by students. The school will investigate all reports submitted and take appropriate action to ensure the safety of the child/youth in accordance with Honduran law.

HDF endorses the Convention on the Rights of the Child of which the host country for the school, Honduras, is a signatory, and seeks to be a safe haven for students who may be experiencing abuse or neglect in any aspect of their lives. HDF will publish this policy annually and make it

available to all parents and applicants, will communicate this policy annually to students, will provide annual training for all staff, and will make every effort to reinforce hiring practices to ensure the safety of students.

In the case of a staff member reported as an alleged offender HDF will conduct a full investigation following a carefully designed course of due process.

This policy was endorsed by the HDF Board of Trustees.

III. Summary of key responsibilities and applicability

Introduction:

HDF'S Child and Youth Protection Policy is based on international law and on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in which Honduras is also a signatory. In particular, the two key articles which address protection to children are:

Artículo 19 - Protección contra el abuso y la negligencia: el Estado protegerá a niños de todas las formas de maltrato por parte de los padres u otras personas responsables del cuidado del niño y establecer programas sociales apropiados para la prevención de abusos y tratado de víctimas.

Artículo 34 - Explotación sexual: el Estado protegerá a los niños de la violencia sexual, explotación y abuso, incluida la prostitución y la participación en la pornografía.

In Honduras, the Code of Childhood and Adolescence under Decree number 73-96 and the Law against sexuality, violence, exploitation, and human trafficking under Decree number 59-2012 promote the protection of children and young people in the country.

Key Responsibilities (Child and Youth Protection):

- All members of the HDF community are required to take reasonable precautions and/or measures to protect the safety and The well-being of the school's children and youth from bullying, neglect, and child abuse including physical, emotional or sexual abuse, and sexual or commercial exploitation.
- All school community members contribute to the school being a “safe haven” for children.

This is best accomplished through:

Adult community members :

- Appropriate personal conduct whenever interacting with children and youth. HDF understands that “appropriate personal conduct” is also dependent on cultural expectations and the need to comply with the legal and ethical expectations and requirements regarding child/youth abuse within the country in which the school operates. In this regard, and as noted in this policy, the school attempts to inform and train applicable community members with regard to these factors.
- Awareness of increased understanding of potentially harmful conduct or behaviors in the prevention or mediation of potential abuse or neglect.
- Removal of a child or youth from an immediately dangerous situation.
- The reporting of inappropriate conduct, neglect, or abuse; or reasonable suspicion thereof.

Children and Youth:

- Children and youth should also exemplify respectful and dignified conduct toward one another, and other members of the community in conjunction with the school's code of conduct.
- In consideration of age and grade appropriateness, children and youth should receive informative sessions for appropriate/inappropriate conduct and the reporting of reasonable incidents/procedures.

Applicability:

Members of the school community in which this policy applies to include:

- All employees of HDF.
- Individuals and entities with contractual relationships with the school.
- Board members, governors, and other school leaders.
- All students, parents, and legal guardians; in particular, with respect to upholding.
- The school's code of conduct, respect for one another, and the reporting of incidents/reasonable suspicions.
- All school chaperones and volunteers who work with children and youth, or participate in school programs and activities involving children and youth.
- Visitors, vendors, or guests on school premises.

IV. Codes of conduct

The public and private conduct of faculty, staff, employees, students, and volunteers acting on behalf of the school can inspire and motivate those with whom they interact or can cause great harm if inappropriate. In addition, HDF recognizes that every individual in the school community should be treated with dignity and respect, emphasizing our special obligation toward children.

In this regard, HDF requires members of the school community to review and periodically sign-off on applicable codes of conduct. The school's codes of conduct help define and clarify the parameters of professional behavioral expectations and practices. In addition, the school's "Common Agreement" is a set of written guidelines designed to safeguard children and all members of the school community, and ensure safe teaching, behavior, and practice within the school.

V. Important policy terms, definitions and indicators

Definitions of abuse are complex and based in various cultures of child-rearing behaviors, gender and role responsibilities, and expectations. The primary determination of abuse is that it is dependent on some form of a relationship that is used to meet the need of the more powerful person, either a member of the family, a teacher or a friend. Research guides many of the definitions that are based in understanding the impact of certain behaviors.

For the purpose of this policy, we will define abuse as a form of maltreatment of a child.

- Abuse or neglect by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm

- Children may be abused in a family, or in an institutional, educational, community setting by those known to them or by others unknown to them (ex. via the internet).

- They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical abuse:

- Inflicting physical injury on a child by other than accidental means, causing skin bruising, burns, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function death; and/or
- Creating a substantial risk of physical harm to a child's bodily functioning; and/or;
- Committing acts that are cruel or inhumane regardless of observable injury. Such acts may include but are not limited to, instances of extreme

discipline demonstrating a disregard of a child's pain and/or mental suffering; and/or;

- Assaulting or criminally mistreating a child as defined by either the criminal code or school policy; and/or;
- Engaging in actions or omissions resulting in injury to, or creating a substantial risk to the physical or mental health or development of a child; and/or;
- Failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any of the above.

Possible indicators of physical abuse:

- Unexplained bruises and welts on any part of the body.
- Bruises of different ages (various colors).
- Injuries reflecting shape of article used (electric cord, belt, buckle, ping pong paddle, hand, etc.).
- Injuries that regularly appear after absence or vacation.
- Unexplained burns, especially to soles, palms, back, or buttocks.
- Burns with a pattern from an electric burner, iron, or cigarette.
- Rope burns on arms, legs, neck, or torso.
- Injuries inconsistent with information offered by the child.
- Immersion burns with a distinct boundary line.
- Unexplained laceration, abrasions, or fractures.

Neglect:

Failure to provide for a child's basic needs within their own environment.

Forms of neglect:

- **Physical** (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision-this would include failure to provide proper adult

guardianship such as leaving children unsupervised at home for an extended period of time.

- **Medical** (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment); and/or

- **Emotional** (e.g., a pattern of actions, such as inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child

to abuse alcohol or other drugs, specific examples may include verbal humiliation, refusing to acknowledge the presence of the child, invasion of privacy for no specific reason, violent threats, etc.).

Possible indicators of neglect:

- A child is unwanted, or basic needs are not met.
- Parents are uninterested in the child's academic performance.
- Parents do not respond to repeated communications from the school.
- The child does not want to go home.
- The child is left for extended periods of time (age-appropriate) without parents or a guardian.
- Parents cannot be reached in case of an emergency.

Important notes:

- Behavioral indicators in and of themselves do not constitute abuse or neglect.
- Together with other indicators, such as family dynamics, they may warrant a referral.

Sexual abuse:

- Sexual abuse is committing or allowing any sexual offense to be committed against a child as defined in either the criminal code of the

country or the school policy, or intentionally touching either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus, or breasts of a child for other than hygiene or child care purposes.

- It can include kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, involving children in looking at/or in the production of sexually inappropriate images, grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).
- Sexual abuse has some different characteristics of child abuse that warrant special attention. While physical abuse is often the result of immediate stress and not usually planned, sexual abuse requires planning with results that are more insidious. The planning referred to as grooming, often results in victims accepting the blame, responsibility, guilt, and shame for the sexual behavior of the offender. Sexual abuse requires far more secrecy than other forms of child abuse, so it is more difficult to report.
- Many victims, through the process of grooming, are taught that sex is a form of love, so they tend to love their offender and often present as happy and well-adjusted children with no negative symptoms because of their perception of being loved.

Working with the sexual offender cannot be done by school counselors. Outside sources of professional assistance would be consulted.

Possible indicators of sexual abuse:

- Sexual knowledge, behavior, or use of language not appropriate to the age level.
- Unusual interpersonal relationship patterns.
- Venereal disease in a child of any age.
- Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding to the oral, genital, or anal areas.
- Difficulty in walking or sitting.

- Refusing to change into PE clothes, fear of bathrooms.
- The child running away from home and not giving any specific complaint.
- Not wanting to be alone with an individual.
- Pregnancy, especially at a young age.
- Extremely protective parenting.

Emotional/ Psychological abuse:

- Emotional abuse is the continuous emotional mistreatment of a child. It can happen by itself, for example through the form of humiliating or degrading treatment such as bad name-calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement, or isolation.
- It can include rejecting or ignoring a child, making them feel worthless or unloved, inadequate, the constant pressure on children to achieve to a far higher level than they can attain, using degrading language or behaviors, threatening them or encouraging them to develop behaviors that are self-destructive, preventing the child from interacting socially with other children or adults, experiences of bullying, including online bullying, the exploitation or corruption of children.

Possible indicators of emotional abuse:

- Severe developmental gaps.
- Severe symptoms of depression, anxiety, withdrawal, or aggression.
- Severe symptoms of self-destructive behavior – self-harming, suicide attempts, engaging in drug or alcohol abuse.
- Overly compliant; too well-mannered; too neat and clean
- Displays attention-seeking behaviors or displays extreme inhibition in play.
- When at play, the behaviour may model or copy negative behavior and language used at home.

- Violent behavior (screaming, cursing, threatening)
- Cruel teasing, bullying
- Telling lies

Sexual exploitation:

Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of a child.

Commercial Exploitation :

Any form of exploitation of children for the purpose of financial gain by an individual. Examples include:

- Exploitation through child labor and in accordance with international law;
- The sale and trafficking of children and adolescents;
- The removal of human organs or tissues, as well as their marketing;
- The contemporary forms of slavery and practices similar to debt bondage, the condition of a servant with forced labor without payment;
- The work whose nature or the circumstances is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children and adolescents;
- The recruitment of children for use in armed conflicts or military activities.
- The use of children and adolescents for illicit activities such as the production and trafficking of drugs and other narcotics.

Bullying

A specific type of aggression (physical, verbal, online or social) which includes behavior that is intended to harm, disturb, intimidate, or humiliate

and is characterized by an imbalance of power between individuals or groups.

Other safeguarding concerns:

- Drug and alcohol use and abuse, including electronic cigarettes
- Relationship abuse
- Sexting
- Cyber-etiquette and cyberbullying
- Self- inflicted situations, including self-harm and eating disorders
- Suicidal thoughts

VI. Reporting of incidents, suspicions, and follow-up procedures

What happens when a teacher has reasonable cause to believe?

Indicators of abuse and neglect as identified in this policy will be used by the staff member as a guideline for reporting to the counselor or the Principal, who will determine if the case needs further attention. A report must be made when a staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect. All reports are kept confidential.

What happens after suspected abuse or neglect is reported?

Teachers and staff play a vital part in helping to protect children by being aware that abuse exists and being prepared to take action should they suspect abuse. It is not their responsibility to investigate, but they do have an obligation to pass on disclosures, allegations or concerns to the counselor or level principal so that they can act to protect a child should it be necessary.

Recommendations for staff to handle disclosure :

- If a child or young person tells you that they are being abused; be welcoming, it may have taken a great deal of courage for them to approach you and they may not do so again.
- Stay calm and listen very carefully.
- Provide reassurance and support.
- Allow the child to tell you at their own pace.
- Report IMMEDIATELY

Procedure to report:

- 1) Where there is cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, it is the responsibility of the staff member to report their suspicions to the counselor, or to the principal.
- 2) In all cases, the Principal will be notified.
- 3) It is the responsibility of the Principal to inform the Superintendent of the suspected case of child abuse or neglect. *
- 4) All staff, faculty, and administrators are mandated to report incidences of abuse and neglect.
- 5) All school employees are also required to report suspicion of abuse or neglect.
- 6) All reports of abuse and neglect must be made to the counselor within 48 hours for immediate response.

*In the event that the abuse or neglect involves a staff member or faculty member of the school, the Principal will follow protocol and school policies.

Procedures for reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect

Step 1

- When a child/youth reports abuse or there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse is occurring, the teacher will seek advice from the grade level psychologist or principal within 24 hours.
- The psychologist or principal will take initial steps to gather information regarding the reported incident and will form a school-based response team as needed to address the report.
- The response team may include the Safeguarding Lead (Principal), Superintendent, School Nurse, and the level Psychologist.
- In all cases, follow-up activities will be conducted in a manner that

ensures that information is documented factually and that strict confidentiality is maintained.

- The following procedure will be used:

- 1) Interview staff members as necessary & document information relative to the case.

- 2) Consult with school personnel to review the child's history in school.

- 3) Report status of the case to the Superintendent.

- 4) Determine the course of follow-up-actions.

Step 2

Based on the acquired information, a plan of action will be developed to assist the child/youth and family.

Actions that may take place are:

- Discussions between the child/youth and psychologist in order to gain more information. Depending upon the age of the child/youth, these discussions may include drawing pictures and playing with dolls to elicit more information as to what may have occurred.

- In-class observations of the child/youth by the teacher, psychologist, or principal.

- Meetings with the family to present the school's concerns.

- Referral of the student and family to external professional counseling.

- Notification of the management of the sponsoring employer of the the concern with the child/youth/family.

- Consultation with the school or another attorney.

- Informal consultation with local authorities.

Most cases of suspected abuse or neglect will be handled by school psychologists', such as those involving:

- Student relationships with peers.

- Parenting skills related to disciplining children at home.

- Student-parent relationships.

- Mental health issues such as sadness, low self-esteem, grieving.

Some cases will be referred to outside resources, for example:

Mental health disorders, such as (but not limited to):

- Depression, psychosis, dissociation, suicide ideation
- Self-inflicted harm (including self-cutting, eating disorders)
- Intent to harm others.

Cases that will be reported for investigation and outside resources/agencies:

- Severe and ongoing physical abuse or neglect
- Sexual abuse and incest.

In extreme cases when families do not stop the abuse or concerns remain about the safety of the child/ youth, reports could be made to:

- Fiscalía de la Niñez
- Human Rights (Derechos de la niñez y adolescencia)
- The consulate
- The employer

Step 3 :

Subsequent to a reported and/or substantiated case of child abuse or neglect:

- 1) The psychologist will maintain contact with the child/youth and family to provide support and guidance as appropriate.
- 2) The psychologist will provide the child's teachers and the principal with ongoing support.
- 3) The psychologist will provide resource materials and strategies for teacher use.
- 4) The psychologist will maintain contact with outside therapists to update the progress of the child in school.

All documentation of the investigation will be kept in the student's school confidential records file. Records sent to schools to which their student may

transfer will be flagged to let the receiving school know there is a confidential file for the student.

The school will make every attempt to share this information only as needed to protect the student.

VII. At risk characteristics and Child Protection protocols

The HDF Child and Youth Protection Policy works for the child/ Youth, the family, and the community.

Child abuse is a multi-faceted issue that involves the dynamics of the child, the family, and the community. The school's policy works to respond to all three levels:

THE CHILD

At risk children, including those with difficult temperament, defiance, health issues, social, emotional or academic difficulties, and those unaware of their rights to protection.

HDF promotes values -especially respect-, study, and social skills, teacher's rights to protection, healthy relationships, assertiveness, support systems.

THE FAMILY

At risk, characteristics include parents under stress, families with perceived less support and access to resources, socially isolated, unusually high expectations placed on their children, parental history of the inappropriate discipline as children.

HDF works with parents to illustrate appropriate discipline, networks with community and health services and child protection practices.

THE COMMUNITY

At risk, characteristics include limited laws on child protection, limited resources to expat families, unusually high work stress placed on parents, acceptance of inappropriate behavior towards children (excessive corporal punishment), unusually high expectations placed on children to achieve.

VIII. HDF'S commitment to additional best practices (“Child and Youth Protection Program”)

What does a Child and Youth Protection Policy and Program mean for the HDF Community?

HDF is defining a standard for the treatment of all children and youth - that they be treated with respect and dignity at all times.

Children and youth have legal and moral rights to their individuality, that when protected, will develop into the ability to meet the needs of the family, community, and global society. Child protection standards defined by HDF, encompass all cultures, Honduran, and international law. When given reasonable cause to believe that these rights are violated, HDF will seek all available resources to restore those rights.

While the HDF Child and Youth Protection Policy is intended to disclose key components and related procedures for the school's overall child and youth safety framework, the school also strives to maintain additional guidelines and “best practices” procedures for the school's ongoing and pro-active child and youth protection program.

Some of those additional areas in which the school is also committed to with respect to its comprehensive Child and Youth Protection Program, but in which limited details have been included in this policy, include:

- Roles of Child Protection Teams.
- Recruitment/screening assessments and background checks for new hires.
- School curriculum considerations related to child and youth protection.
- Training requirements for leadership, staff, parents, and students (the school has a scheduled program of regular, systematic professional training

for volunteers, contractors, faculty, and staff on student safeguarding, child abuse prevention, recognition, intervention, and reporting).

- Other formal learning programs throughout the school experience related to child protection may cover areas such as bullying, personal safety, physical abuse, manipulation, grooming, online safety, healthy sexual behavior, neglect and negligent behavior, self-harm, staying safe away from home, commercial exploitation, and disclosing abuse. (These programs are to be delivered by members of faculty or external providers who are trained in these areas).

- Overview of anti-bullying policies (including online/virtual safety)

- Special considerations for student trips & related transportation and lodging issues.

- School safety and security considerations (school environment, building and facilities, protective equipment).

- Whistle-blowing (anti-retaliation) procedures.

- Procedures/response for dealing with alleged staff offenders.

- Procedures/response for dealing with a student who has been harmed.

- Procedures for domestic violence in employee families.

- Relationships with local resources & community partnerships & support agencies (the school develops meaningful and effective relationships with external organizations and bodies that are able to provide appropriate support and advice on matters related to child protection).

- Public communication of the school's child protection policy/procedures.

- Confidentiality and record-keeping procedures.

- Self-audit protocols (adherence to child and youth protection policies and procedures are reviewed with sufficient regularity and systematically).

- Community members' acknowledgment of obligations concerning child protection policy/applicable codes of conduct.

