



## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

**Aproximar, Cooperativa de Solidariedade Social, CRL**

**Date: 09-08-2021**

**(Revision of the May 12th, 2015 version)**

### **1. Introduction and commitment to protect children**

Children are human beings full of rights with a voice that must always be taken into account and that can be potentially subjected to abuse, violence and neglect in families, but also in communities, institutions and organisations. Aproximar is committed to creating and maintaining a protective environment and strongly condemns all forms of child abuse and exploitation, within or outside the organisation. This Child Protection Policy reflects the moral obligation to put in place all reasonable safeguarding measures to ensure the safety and protection of children.

#### **1.1. Definition and Organisation's Goal**

Aproximar, Social Solidarity Cooperative (hereafter designated as Aproximar) is a non-profit organisation, with an intervention in the local, regional, national and transnational scope, with the goal of providing services and, tools and resources that empower people, groups, organisations and communities to respond in an autonomous way to the demands and necessities of the social inclusion process.

Aproximar has as a principle that every individual has the potential to accomplish his/her own life project. The ultimate mission of Aproximar is to value the social and human capital of organisations and their stakeholders as a strategy to respond, in a sustainable manner, to the challenges and opportunities arising from the surrounding environment.

Aproximar collaborate with the Public, Profit and Social Economy Sectors in order to base its action on 5 pillars: Act, Empower, Train, Cooperate and Disseminate.

#### **1.2. Child Protection Policy Scope**

The objective of this Policy is to define the guidelines and procedures of the internal policy for the protection of children that relate to the organic structure of Aproximar, in the context of its activities. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a "child" as someone under the age of 18 years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. This is the definition that Aproximar adopts for the purposes of its Child Protection Policy. In defining a Child Protection Policy, Aproximar is committed to promoting children's rights in all actions and projects concerning their involvement. Aproximar undertakes to respect and guarantee the rights provided in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations in 1989 and ratified by Portugal on September 12, 1990, in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic and in the Law on the Protection of Children and Young People in Danger (Law nr. 149/99, of September 1).

This Child Protection Policy is applicable to every member that collaborate with Aproximar – staff/employees, national and international volunteers, trainers, interns, partners, etc. Every member

involved in, or supporting the organisation's programs, projects or services are held accountable to the standards in this policy. The policy has the following aims:

- a) Ensure that staff, volunteers, trainers and interns have clear information on the Child Protection Policy;
- b) Ensure that staff, volunteers, trainers and interns adopt procedures and work methodologies aligned with the mission, values and principles of Aproximar and that promote the empowerment of children;
- c) Ensure that the action of Aproximar respects the rights and principles established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international recommendations, instruments and guidelines produced in this context; as well as by the national legislation (Law No. 147/99 of 1 September, reviewed by Law No. 26/2018 of 05/07);
- d) Ensure that staff, volunteers, trainers, and interns working at Aproximar have appropriate opportunities for training and skills development in the field of the child's protection and human rights.

### **1.3. Guiding principles of the Child Protection Policy**

In line with the guiding principles of intervention set out in Article 4 of the Portuguese Law on the Protection of Children and Young People in Danger (Law No. 147/99 of 1 September, with the following amendments) guiding principles of the Aproximar's Child Protection Policy are the following:

- a) The best interests of the child – the intervention must take into account the interests and rights of the child and the young person as a priority;
- b) Privacy – the promotion of the rights and protection of the child must be carried out with respect for the intimacy, right to the image and reservation of his/her private life;
- c) Early intervention – intervention shall be carried out as soon as the danger situation is known;
- d) Minimum intervention – the intervention must be carried out exclusively by entities and institutions whose action is indispensable for the effective promotion of rights and protection of the child in danger;
- e) Proportionality and up-to-datedness – the intervention must be the necessary and appropriate to the situation of danger in which the child is at the time when the decision is made and can only interfere with his life and that of his family to the extent that it is strictly necessary for that purpose;
- f) Parental responsibility – the intervention must be carried out in such a way that the parents take on their duties to the child;
- g) Obligation to provide information – the child, parents, legal representative or person who has custody are entitled to be informed of their rights, the reasons for the intervention and the way it takes place;
- h) Compulsory hearing and participation – the child, separately or in the company of the parents or person chosen by him/her, as well as the legal representative or person who has custody are

entitled to be heard and participate in the acts and in the definition of the measure to promote rights and protection.

## 2. Accountability

The board members and coordinators, are responsible for:

- a) Respect and promote the rights of children in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- b) Ensure that the Child Protection Policy is implemented in the organisation;
- c) Ensure that all members working at Aproximar know the Child Protection Policy;
- d) Have up-to-date information on data protection, confidentiality, information sharing and other legal issues that may have an impact on the protection of children;
- e) Recruit, train, support and supervise their staff, trainees, inters and volunteers in accordance with the principles of protection of children and the promotion of their rights;
- f) Request their staff, trainees, inters and volunteers to act in accordance with the Child Protection Policy;
- g) Designate the person responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Child Protection Policy, to whom the following responsibilities are assigned:
  - Receive complaints from professionals and beneficiary persons who reveal concerns in the field of the protection of children and collect any relevant data/information;
  - Keep an up-to-date record of such complaints;
  - Report such complaints to the board members;
  - Collect and evaluate relevant information on the overall implementation of the Child and Protection Policy, making comments and making suggestions to the Board members;
  - Coordinate activities and procedures for the effective implementation, monitoring and review of the Aproximar's Child Protection Policy.

Staff, trainees, inters and volunteers of Aproximar are responsible for adopting the appropriate procedures to protect and promote the rights of children, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in full compliance with the guiding principles of the Aproximar's Child Protection Policy.

## 3. Policy Implementation and procedures

### 3.1. Recruitment procedures:

The procedures of recruitment of staff, volunteers and interns at Aproximar are in accordance to the principle of safeguard children. For positions that involves regular contact with children, Aproximar's recruitment screening processes include the presentation of the certificate of criminal record and consider the information contained in the assessment of their suitability for the performance of duties (Article 2(2) of Law Nr. 113/2009 of 17 September 2009).

### 3.2. Code of Conduct

Staff, volunteers, trainers, and interns working at Aproximar, are bound to a code of conduct that promotes respect for the rights of children and ensures the practical implementation of the guiding principles defined in the Child Protection Policy. The duties staff, volunteers, trainers, and interns working at Aproximar are to:

- a) Guarantee the rights provided for in the Convention on the Rights of the Child to all children, without discrimination, regardless of any consideration of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion of the child, his/her parents or legal representatives, or of his/her national, ethnic or social origin, fortune, disability, birth or any other situation;
- b) Report any concerns, suspicions or situations of violation of the rights and principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- c) Not disclose personal data of children, being mandatory to sign a consent and confidentiality form when there is a need to collect personal data from children and young people;
- d) Not cooperate with institutions and entities that act against the best interests of children;
- e) Not to use language or to behave inappropriately, disrespectfully or harmfully to the rights of children;
- f) Not use information or images of children without the written consent of their parents, legal representatives, or guardians (in the case of children under 18 years), always with respect for the opinion of children. The child's formal consent must also be provided by the child himself if he/she is at least 12 years of age.

### 3.3. Child protection training

Every time the Policy is updated or at every two years, the Policy will be shared with staff, volunteers, interns, in form of a Policy awareness session/team meetings; or online/face-to-face training. The awareness/ training session will include an explanation of the Code of Conduct and how to apply it in the work developed at Aproximar, reporting procedures, and some information on who to contact with questions about child protection.

### 3.4. Child Protection Policy review

Aproximar, in collaboration with the person responsible for the Child Protection Policy, revises the Child Protection Policy whenever relevant changes in national or international legislation take place or at least once every five years.

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