



American School Foundation of Monterrey

Child Safeguarding Policy



Dear ASFM Community,

The physical and emotional well-being of all students is the highest priority for the American School Foundation of Monterrey (ASFM). In accordance with the legislation of the state of Nuevo León, and best practice, ASFM has developed and adopted a **Child Safeguarding Policy**. This guides our staff, administrators, and families in matters related to the health, safety, and care of children and adolescents in attendance at our school. Child safeguarding is a community responsibility, and we share this document with all ASFM community members to address critical global issues.

The **ASFM Child Safeguarding Policy** is based on local and national laws, including the Mexican and State Constitution, the General Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents, Secretaría de Educación (SE) regulations, and international treaties and conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

ASFM Safeguarding Team



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Introduction

A school community must work for the positive social development of all students. We must start by strengthening the social and emotional skills that promote inclusion, respect for diversity, and coexistence. Community members must know what to do when faced with situations or behaviors relating to harm, abuse, harassment, and/or school violence. Everyone must be aware of the protocols and required actions to ensure the well-being of children.

The legislation and educational authorities of Nuevo León as well as the international legal framework require that schools create environments of peace, trust, and respect for human rights. In addition, school communities must promote social cohesion, and eliminate violent behavior and any form of harassment or discrimination. Violations of human rights, and crimes committed against children and adolescents damage human dignity, and should be eradicated. When this is not possible, the offense must be identified, stopped, and addressed in a comprehensive manner that complies with the highest national and international standards on this issue.

Legal Framework

It is the obligation of the Mexican State to carry out actions for the prevention and timely intervention of any form of abuse, harassment, or sexual abuse of children and adolescents. As a school incorporated into "Secretaría de Educación", ASFM abides by Mexican laws, protocols, and procedures that are based, in summary, on international and national provisions. (See **Appendix A** for more information)



Terminology and Definitions

Child

A *child* is anyone under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. For the purposes of safeguarding at ASFM, a *child* also refers to any person enrolled at ASFM as a student, even if that individual is over the age of 18.

Child abuse

The abuse of a child, including all forms of physical or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and commercial or other exploitation that cause or are likely to cause harm to the health, development, or dignity of a child, or endanger their survival, in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Exposure to intimate partner violence within the family context is included among the forms of child abuse. (See **Appendix B** for *Recognizing Signs and Symptoms of any kind of abuse*)

Child Safeguarding

Child Safeguarding refers to any and all actions taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. It means protecting children from abuse and maltreatment, preventing harm to children's health or development, ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care, and taking action to enable children to have positive outcomes. Child protection is part of the Safeguarding process, as it focuses on protecting children identified as suffering or likely to suffer harm.

Physical abuse

Occurs when there is the use of physical force against a child, resulting in harm and injury to the child. It includes, but is not limited to, hitting, punching, beating, kicking, shaking, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning, and suffocating, sustained physical activity or sustained physical restraint, or otherwise causing intentional harm to a child. Corporal punishment or the use of a physical means of discipline may meet the criteria of physical abuse.



Emotional (psychological) abuse

The maltreatment of a child that causes severe and adverse effects on their emotional development. This type of maltreatment is often manifested through words, actions, and/or deliberate indifference, and can involve rejection, isolation, belittlement, domination, and frequent criticism of the child. Emotional abuse includes conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, that they are inadequate or value only if they meet the needs of another person, imposing age or developmentally inappropriate expectations on children, and causing children frequently to be frightened.

Neglect and negligent treatment

Frequently defined as the failure of a parent or other person with responsibility for the child to provide needed food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision to the degree that the child's health, safety, and well-being are threatened with harm. Types of neglect can be medical, physical, or emotional. Negligent treatment would include failure to provide age-appropriate adult guardianship or supervision.

Child sexual abuse

Consists of the participation of a child in a sexual activity that they do not fully understand; to which they are not capable of giving consent; or for which, due to developmental issues, they are not prepared and cannot express consent; or which violates laws or social taboos. Sexual abuse of children occurs when this activity takes place between a child and adult; or between children. It may include various sexual practices with or without physical contact such as exhibitionism, touching, manipulation, corruption, anal, vaginal or oral sex. Commercial child sexual exploitation, and all forms of child sexual abuse material, are considered child sexual abuse.

Note about Consent - *According to the current Laws in Nuevo León, consent may only be given as such by persons who are sixteen years old or older.*

School harassment

A form of psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, or cyber aggression or abuse, inside or outside a public or private educational institution, that a student receives at the



hand of another student or students, repeatedly, and without apparent provocation on the part of the recipient; attacking their dignity and hindering their academic performance, social integration or integration with groups, as well as their participation in educational programs, damaging their willingness to participate or take advantage of the educational programs or activities of the school, by making them feel a reasonable fear of suffering some type of harm.

School violence

A malicious act or deliberate exclusion with the intention of physically or psychologically harming a person belonging to the educational community, whether students, teachers, parents, guardians, administrative or subordinate staff, that occurs within school facilities, or in other spaces directly related to the school environment, around the school or places where extracurricular activities take place. Actions carried out through social networks or any type of communication are considered school violence when the intent is to damage the dignity of persons in the school community.

School violence may be physical, verbal, psychological, cybernetic, sexual and in the form of social exclusion.

(See **Appendix C** for more information on types of school violence)

Bullying

Intentional and aggressive behavior occurring repeatedly against a person where there is a real or perceived power imbalance, and where this person feels vulnerable and powerless to defend themselves. The unwanted behavior is hurtful. It can be physical, including hitting, kicking and the destruction of property; verbal, such as teasing, insulting and threatening; or relational, through the spreading of rumors and exclusion from a group. Bullying occurs without provocation, and it constitutes a form of peer violence.



Cyberbullying

Involves the posting or sending of electronic messages, pictures or videos, aimed at harassing, threatening or targeting another person, via chat rooms, blogs, and instant messaging on electronic platforms. Cyberbullying can cause profound harm as it can affect individuals at any time, quickly reaching a wide audience. Technology perpetuates cyberbullying threats since messages may be posted and reposted over time.

Threat

Any verbal, written, electronic, or digital communication that expresses an intention to cause harm, injury, intimidation, coercion, fear, or negative consequences to any member of the school community, or to damage, destroy, or compromise the safety of the school building, facilities, equipment, or property. A threat may be direct, through explicit statements, or indirect through veiled messages that clearly imply a risk.

Peer-on-peer abuse

Is defined as any form of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships, both intimate and non-intimate. Peer-on-peer abuse can involve but is not limited to physical abuse, harmful sexual behavior (HSB), sexual abuse, bullying, harassment, and cyberbullying. Initiation and hazing, which refer to any activity expected of someone in joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them, regardless of a person's willingness and whether the activity is in person or through electronic means, falls in this category.

*(See **Appendix D** for more information on Peer-on- Peer Abuse)*

Disclosure

The process by which individuals start to share their experiences of abuse or harm. Disclosure may be accidental or intentional. Upon disclosure, ASFM employees are required to complete the corresponding form.

Mandated Reporter

An individual who is legally required to report observed or suspected maltreatment or abuse. All ASFM employees are required to promptly report any observed or suspected



maltreatment or abuse in all its forms. This obligation extends to situations where a student or third party discloses such incidents to them, or when the employee suspects that the child may be exposed to or suffering harm.

Malicious Reporting

Intentionally providing false or misleading information with the intent to harm, deceive, or manipulate a situation. It involves making a report or accusation that is knowingly untrue, often with intent to cause damage to someone's reputation, create unwarranted consequences, or achieve some other harmful outcome. Disciplinary measures may be taken when a report is deemed malicious.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents and/or Guardians Responsibilities

Parents and/or guardians shall assume the responsibilities to prevent and address situations related to child safeguarding, in the following terms:

- Observe and detect risk factors.
- Talk to children about the characteristics of self-care and the situations to avoid so that they will not be hurt, abused, or mistreated.
- Read and sign the documents and procedures about the organization of the school, as well as the actions and procedures required in cases of child abuse, child sexual abuse, school harassment, and/or violence.
- Know where to locate information about support in the case of any type of child abuse, or any other situation that arises in the school.
- Maintain constant communication with the school through written communications and visits.

Teachers and Staff Responsibilities

Teachers and staff should consistently adhere to the ASFM Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct guidelines (See **Appendix E: Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct**).



ASFM employees have a duty of care to protect children from harm and prevent all forms of child abuse and maltreatment. Fundamental obligations for Child Safeguarding include:

- **Active observation and detection of risk factors.** Read and sign the documents and protocols about the organization of the school; actions and procedures in cases of child abuse, child sexual abuse, school harassment and/or violence.
- **Reporting.** Report any violation to the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct. Report, in writing, by completing Appendix H, any indication of any form of abuse and disclosure.

Campus Resiliency Team

This group meets to plan and discuss overall safety, security, and emergency preparedness policies and strategies that will lead to a more resilient organization. While prevention is the goal, this team oversees mitigation, response, communications, follow-up, and evaluation of various aspects including facilities, security, policies and procedures, hiring, and others

Schoolwide Safeguarding Team

The Schoolwide Safeguarding Team is comprised of the Child Safeguarding Director, Child Safeguarding Leads (Deans of Students and Director of Extended Learning), School Attorney, Human Resources Manager, a School Psychologist, and a School Counselor

The functions of this team include:

- Updating school-wide policies and procedures
- Ensuring we have clear systems of response
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation of systems and processes.

Child Safeguarding Director

An individual who serves as the lead manager and point person for all aspects of the ASFM Child Safeguarding Program.

The Child Safeguarding Director will maintain up-to-date professional development training in policy and program management aspects of child protection in order to implement best practices within the role of Coordinator. The Child Safeguarding Director will stay actively involved with a network of international schools in relation to safeguarding to monitor best practices and promote in-house training.



Safeguarding Lead

An individual, who, by nature of their professional position in the school, serves as the lead contact for core aspects of the program. The Safeguarding Lead is the Divisional Dean of Students.

In collaboration with the Child Safeguarding Director, the Safeguarding Lead will maintain up-to-date professional development training in child protection in order to implement best practices within their specific roles.

Safeguarding Response Team

The Safeguarding Response Team is called when there is a reasonable cause after an incident was reported. The Team includes the Child Safeguarding Director, Dean of Students, Counselor, and Psychologist. The Principal, Lawyer, Educational Partnership Director, Medical Doctor, Human Resources Manager, and teachers may join this team as needed. Decisions regarding safeguarding incidents should be made by this team and recorded.

ASFM Employees and Interns

All individuals who are employed or engaged by the school and whose duties include contact with children are mandated to sign and abide by the ASFM Safeguarding Code of Conduct and follow the safeguarding policies and procedures as outlined in the handbook. This includes substitutes, contracted instructors, and external coaches.

These individuals are mandated to attend an introductory safeguarding training upon initiating employment or volunteering, and annual safeguarding training during the tenure of their employment/volunteering.

Contracted Partner Agencies, Vendors, Associates, and Invited Guests or Volunteers

All significant partner agencies, vendors, and invited guests who are defined as such by written contracts with the school, are informed of the ASFM safeguarding policies and procedures, and may or may not be mandated to undergo background screening and sign the ASFM Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct, the ASFM Code of Conduct and Ethics for non-employees, depending on their contact with students.



Local Resources and Agencies

Children and Family Support Centers, Ministry of Education (Secretaría de Educación), and local police are all agencies that the school will partner with in response to suspected or confirmed cases of child maltreatment on an as-needed basis.

Country of Origin Embassies or Local Employers

Employment and embassy organizations may be called upon to partner with the school in response to suspected or confirmed cases of child maltreatment.

Greater Community Members

All members of the greater ASFM community play a vital role in protecting the safety and well-being of students through prevention, education, support, and reporting.

Safe Recruitment and Hiring Procedures

Ensuring that all current and potential employees, outsourced contractors, interns, and volunteers are safe to work with children is paramount to safeguarding at ASFM. A thorough and standardized process applies to the recruitment and hiring of personnel, and includes the following:

- Advertisements for vacancies clearly state that safeguarding policies and procedures are enforced for all employees at ASFM, and screening procedures will take place during recruitment.
- Criminal background checks are undertaken for all newly hired and contracted employees, and retroactive checks have taken place for all current employees.
- The requirement is that all potential employees sign a self-disclosure statement reporting any criminal or misdemeanor convictions.
- Attention will be given to any suspicious elements in the employment history (including gaps), and references will be sought to clarify any areas of concern.
- At least one interview question will include a child safeguarding question or scenario to gauge the appropriateness of the response.
- The employee must read, understand and agree to comply with the ASFM Code of Conduct and Ethics as part of the terms and conditions of employment.
- A minimum of two professional references shall be required, at least one of which will



be a verbal reference check.

- The verbal reference check will include a question about the candidate's safety in working with children.

Risk Assessment and Reduction

Overall risk management at ASFM is overseen by the Board of Directors, the Superintendent, and the Child Safeguarding Director. They work together with key individuals to review school-wide risk management, safety, security, and preparedness operations, procedures, and systems.

Ensuring that safeguarding is integrated into risk assessment and mitigation means considering ways in which our students may be vulnerable to risk, and doing everything we reasonably can to reduce their risk. This involves requiring up-to-date risk assessment and mitigation documentation for all off-site, school-sponsored events and trips, undertaking an annual review of all emergency protocols, implementing regular practice drills, and overseeing safe transitions (transport to/from school).

Risk management in safeguarding will also remain an integral part of the updating, creation, and configuration of physical campus spaces.

(See **Appendix F** for *Trip Guidelines for Trip Leader and Chaperones*.)

Education and Training

There will be annual training and educational opportunities for the ASFM community to develop and maintain the necessary knowledge and skills to safeguard children. All training, education, and workshops will be sensitive to the language needs of the trainees.

Employees, Interns, Volunteers

Initial induction safeguarding training will be mandatory for all incoming employees, interns, and volunteers, and will include instruction on definitions, signs, and symptoms of child maltreatment, reporting expectations, a detailed review of the ASFM Child Safeguarding Policy, and Procedures, and code of conduct expectations as outlined in the



Safeguarding Agreement. Any established employees who have not been through the induction training will be required to do so retroactively.

Subsequent to induction and annual training, all employees, interns, and volunteers who have direct contact with children will be mandated to undergo refresher training annually, with scenario-based learning modules to enhance practical understanding and problem solving around child safeguarding issues, and to incorporate lessons learned and update best practices.

Contracted Partner Agencies, Vendors and Invited Guests

Contracted partner agencies, vendors, student mentors, and invited guests with whom the school has a written contract will be instructed on the ASFM Safeguarding Code of Conduct, and if there is extended student contact as part of their duties, undergo screening protocols and agree to sign and abide by the code of conduct for non-employees.

Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians will have opportunities to attend educational workshops on safeguarding, with specific guidance on how to raise a concern or make a report, as well as opportunities to attend positive discipline and digital parenting workshops.

Students

Students from K-12 receive age-appropriate curricular or extracurricular instruction on health and safety topics relevant to their age and stage. As a school, we recognize the vital role curriculum-based programs such as *Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)*, *Comprehensive Sexuality Education*, and *Digital Citizenship* play in educating and empowering students on their right to live free from maltreatment and harm and have committed to prioritizing and strengthening school-wide best practices in the delivery of these curriculums.

Responding and Reporting Procedures

ASFM is committed to providing a safe learning environment where students can thrive; therefore, we view student safety as a priority and shared responsibility within our community.



Recognizing possible signs of abuse, neglect, and exploitation; managing a disclosure, reporting a safeguarding concern, and taking action on the report are essential steps in the safeguarding policies and procedures.

The five key stages of reporting and responding procedures are:

1. Reporting a disclosure or concern
2. Establishing reasonable cause
3. Ensuring safety
4. Creating a response plan
5. Follow-Up

Throughout the five reporting and responding stages, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will support students, staff, and parents to the best of their abilities by

- Taking all concerns, reports, and disclosures seriously
- Following policies and procedures
- Ensuring regular communication between school and home to keep all parties informed of the process. *In the event of disclosure, parents should be informed within 24 hours, except when they are probable aggressors.*
- Ensuring secure and comprehensive documentation.
- Maintaining confidentiality and sharing information on a need-to-know basis only with relevant individuals and agencies.
- Ensuring that referrals to outside agencies, counseling, or other avenues of support and protection take place as needed.
- Ensuring that our approach to safeguarding remains child-centered and in the best interests of the child. The procedures vary slightly if the allegations of misconduct/abuse involve an employee.

To keep silent about an act of child abuse or any other crime against a student implies liability due to failure to perform a duty of care.



Reporting Disclosure

People may be uncomfortable being on the receiving end of a report or disclosure and may be unsure of the best way to respond to the information.

Guidelines for Responding to Disclosure

1. Find a neutral setting where you can have quiet, no interruptions, and individually speak with the person disclosing.
2. Respond calmly and matter-of-factly. Even if the story is difficult to hear, it is important not to register disgust or alarm. Do not make judgmental or disparaging comments.
3. Do not lead in telling. Just listen, letting him/her explain in his/her own words. Don't ask for details.
4. Do not swear to secrecy or promises you cannot keep. You must report.
5. Use verbal and non-verbal cues that indicate you believe what is being disclosed. Reassure the person disclosing that it is right to share this information and that what happened is not his/her fault.
6. Do not promise that things will get better, but offer that he/she will be accompanied throughout the process.
7. Invite the person disclosing to share this information in writing, if that helps.
8. Inform what will happen next, explaining that you must tell someone else while respecting confidentiality and making their safety a priority.
9. Make a carefully written recording of what was said.
10. Use appropriate reporting channels by completing Appendix H.
11. Respect confidentiality. Share with the corresponding Dean of Students or Response Team as required, but keep information from others. Do not confront the person involved in the report.

(see **Appendix G** for *General Recommendations for Responding to Disclosure, Bullying, and/or Violence at School*)

When and to Whom Should You Report

Make sure to complete Appendix H.



You may also report to the corresponding Dean of Students or escalate the report to the corresponding Principal. It is necessary that the person receiving a disclosure completes the ASFM Safeguarding Report Form as soon as possible.

(See **Appendix H** - Safeguarding/Concern Report _ Template)

Categories of Reasonable Cause of Abuse

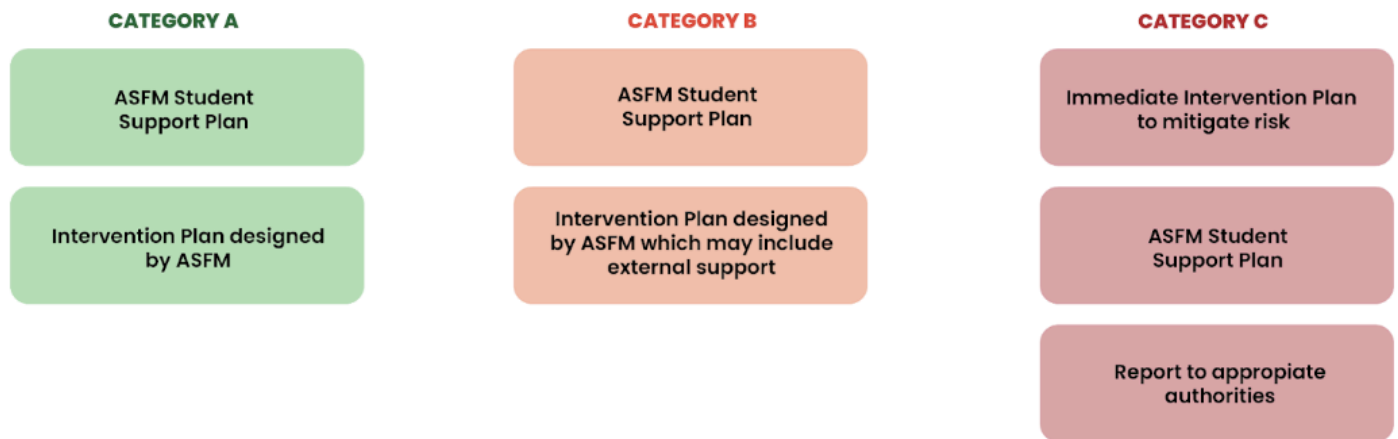
The Safeguarding Response Team will classify the gathered information into categories for reasonable cause.

CATEGORIES FOR REASONABLE CAUSE OF ABUSE		
CATEGORY A	CATEGORY B	CATEGORY C
The intensity of the issue does not present a danger to the safety of the child. Support is provided by ASFM staff. External support may be recommended.	The intensity and/or frequency of the problem presents a medium to long-term danger to the child. Support is provided by ASFM staff. External support may be required.	The problem is of an intensity and/or frequency that presents an immediate danger to the child. Support is provided by ASFM. External support is required. In some events, immediate intervention may include removing the child from the immediate risk. This category requires reporting to local authorities and includes any event that rises to the level of a criminal investigation.

****All cases must be documented***



Safeguarding Measures Based on Category of Reasonable Cause of Abuse



Documentation and Confidentiality

The reporting and responding procedures will be accompanied by secure documentation. This documentation will be initiated by the appropriate Dean of Students and/or Counselor and will be maintained in a confidential manner.

The documentation will clearly outline the nature of the concern, the steps of the inquiry process, the response plan, the implementation of the response plan, and any audit or review results.

The Safeguarding Lead is responsible for the completion and storage of the documentation in a secure location and will follow the school's guiding principles of records management and data protection.



Child Safe Communication Guidelines

Use of Images and Information

The school uses photographs and videos of school activities and events to support the learning process and to record the individual progress and accomplishments of our students. The following platforms Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn are approved for professional social media use. Parent permission is sought annually by the school for the use of student images in-school marketing and publications. No photographers will have unsupervised access to children, be allowed to have one-to-one photo sessions, or be allowed to have photo sessions at a student's home without permission from a parent.

The following general guidelines apply when posting, sharing, or sending photos or videos of school events in authorized publications:

- Only first names should appear in the media on public sites.
- No other personal, identifying information should be included.
- Consider cultural, religious, and other beliefs.
- Personal equipment should be avoided for school use. If this is unavoidable, images must be deleted after being uploaded to the correct school computer or content folder.

Acceptable Use Agreement

ASFM employees should never use phone calls, texting, social media, emails, or similar technology to communicate with students in ways that are outside their professional relationship with students. A significant number of social media sites require children to be over the age of 13. Employees should not ask their students to use social media in a way that violates legal requirements or terms-of-service agreements.

In the event that an adult sees something on a student's social media page that concerns them, the Dean of Students, Child Safeguarding Director, Counselor, or Principal should be informed. Every ASFM student agrees to engage with technology in a respectful, honest, responsible, and safe manner through an Acceptable Use Agreement. The specific divisional



expectations are outlined in the divisional handbooks, and divisional discipline policies apply if violations occur.



Appendices

A – Legal Framework

B- Common Risk Indicators

C – Types of School Violence

D – Peer-on-Peer Abuse

E- Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct

F – Trip Guidelines for Trip Leader and Chaperones

G – General Recommendations For Responding to Disclosure, Bullying and/or Violence At School

H – Safeguarding Disclosure/Concern Report Form



References

ASIJ safeguarding Handbook 2019-2020

Lincoln Child Protection

SAS Child Safeguarding At A Glance

ZIS Child Safeguarding and Protection

AISA Child Protection Handbook (3rd Edition)

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