



# Presidential Policy

LAST UPDATED: 31 August 2023

## Policy on Safeguarding AFS Participants

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#### **Policy title: Policy Statement for Safeguarding AFS Participants**

Adopted on April 4th, 2019

AFS Intercultural Programs, Inc. and its Network of AFS organizations around the world (collectively “AFS”) is committed to ensuring that AFS participants are safe. Because our organization is dedicated to maintaining a zero tolerance for abuse, it is imperative that everyone actively participates in the protection of youth. The purpose of this document is to ensure that any suspicion or allegation of sexual misconduct is reported to and addressed by AFS in a prompt, supportive and consistent manner with the safety and well-being of the participant as the highest priority. AFS believes that it is always unacceptable for any person to experience abuse of any kind and makes all reasonable efforts to safeguard the welfare and minimize the risk of abuse of all people participating in AFS programs. Staff, volunteers and virtual facilitators of AFS around the world who become aware of an actual or potential situation of abuse or harm have a duty to promptly address the situation according to this policy. Staff, volunteers and virtual facilitators must also report the situation to the local authorities in accordance with local law requirements as well as any applicable national or local policies and procedures.

#### **AFS recognizes that:**

- The welfare of all participants involved in AFS activities is paramount
- All participants, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity have the right to protection from all types of harm or abuse
- Working in partnership with participants, their parents / caregivers / host communities, volunteers, schools and any other appropriate agencies is essential in promoting participant's welfare.

#### **The purpose of the policy is:**

- To provide a framework and policies for protection of AFS participants.
- To provide staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect that a participant may be experiencing or be at risk of harm.

**This policy applies to all AFS staff,volunteers and virtual facilitators or anyone else working on behalf of AFS around the world while undertaking AFS activities anywhere. AFS (AFS Intercultural Programs and each AFS Network organization) will seek to safeguard program participants by:**

- Not tolerating abuse by staff, volunteers and virtual facilitators in any form
- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- Implementing appropriate AFS program standards policies and procedures for the wellbeing of participants
- Informing their respective staff and volunteers of the responsibilities with regard to participants' protection
- Ensuring that any necessary checks of all staff and volunteers (during the recruitment and application process) are made in line with local law, and not to employ (on a paid or volunteer basis) anyone who has been banned by local authorities from relevant activities such as activities involving youth
- Sharing information about child protection and harassment prevention good practice with participants, host families, staff, volunteers and virtual facilitators
- Sharing information about concerns with appropriate agencies that need to know and involving AFS International and any appropriate AFS Network Organizations ·
- Providing effective management for staff,volunteers and virtual facilitators through appropriate training and support

#### **Support for those who report abuse:**

Any person reporting a complaint or allegation or expressing concern to AFS for the wellbeing of a program participant, whether they are staff, volunteers, virtual facilitators, family members, exchange students or a member of the general public must be assured that:

- They will be taken seriously
- Their comments will usually be treated confidentially unless AFS is required to share this information with appropriate authorities

**PLEASE ENSURE THAT ANY INCIDENT RELATED TO THE SAFETY OF A PARTICIPANT THAT INVOLVES HARASSMENT OR SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IS REPORTED BY LOCAL AFS STAFF IN THE SUPPORT MODULE OF AFS GLOBAL AND THAT THE CASE IS MARKED AS A "LEGAL / SEXUAL MISCONDUCT VICTIM" CASE. QUESTIONS MAY BE ADDRESSED BY EMAIL TO AFS INTERNATIONAL TO THE AFS CONSULTANT OF PROGRAM POLICY AND SUPPORT, EUNICE NETA at [eunice.neta@afs.org](mailto:eunice.neta@afs.org), OR BY CALLING HER AT (+351) 91.630.7512.**