



Code of Conduct Regulation

MCO approved – March 2023

General information

Approved by	Management Council Executive Board			
Approved on	29 March 2023			
Version	1			
Binding for	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. All member associations of SOS Children's Villages International (ordinary members), including their affiliated entities; the members of their governing bodies; and their employees and others working for them or on their behalf2. SOS Children's Villages International, including its affiliated entities; the members of its governing bodies; and its employees and others working for it or on its behalf3. This document is valid from the date indicated. Legal enforceability has to be ensured at a national level respecting local laws.			
Based on	People and Culture Policy (tbc)			
Replaces	Current Code of Conduct			
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Policy framework

The SOS Children's Villages International policy framework, approved by the General Assembly in June 2021, has three binding levels (foundations, policies and regulations) and a non-binding level (user guides).

FOUNDATION	POLICY	 REGULATION	USER GUIDE
Principal binding documents of our federation that form the basis of our work	Binding documents with high-level obligations, anchored in a foundation	Binding documents with detailed implementation obligations, anchored in a policy or foundation	Non-binding guidance material to support in implementation of foundations, policies & regulations
Approved by General Assembly	Approved by General Assembly	Approved by the MCO and the Executive Board	Approved by Executive Board



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Purpose

As SOS Children's Villages we acknowledge that, as a Federation committed to the protection and wellbeing of children, young people and communities, and which operates in many countries, we have a responsibility to work in a way that supports and protects those we serve as well as those who work with and for us. We recognise that we are entrusted with funds and resources by sponsors and donors and that we must be able to demonstrate to our supporters that their confidence in us is well placed.

Our Code of Conduct is essential in establishing shared expectations regarding acceptable behaviours. Our aim is to promote a safe environment where everyone has the opportunity to achieve their full potential in their role, where our assets are managed and used wisely and where the best interests of the children and young people that we care for are promoted. In addition, the Code of Conduct seeks to protect the safety and dignity of adult programme participants and members of the communities in which we work.

Scope of the Code of Conduct (B)

The Code of Conduct applies to all those working with or on behalf of SOS Children's Villages in any capacity and at every level and at all times. This includes board members (including president, vice-president and national directors), paid staff, volunteers and others such as honorary positions, consultants, interns, partners including donors, visitors, vendors and suppliers.

We recognise that the behaviour of those working with us, both during the time they are at work and also during their private life, reflects on the Federation.

Approach to the Code of Conduct – Living our Values (B)

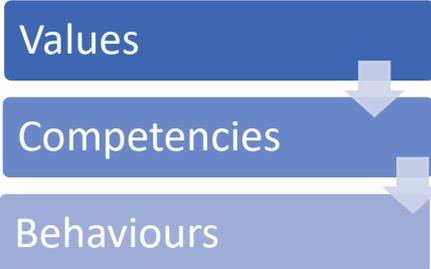
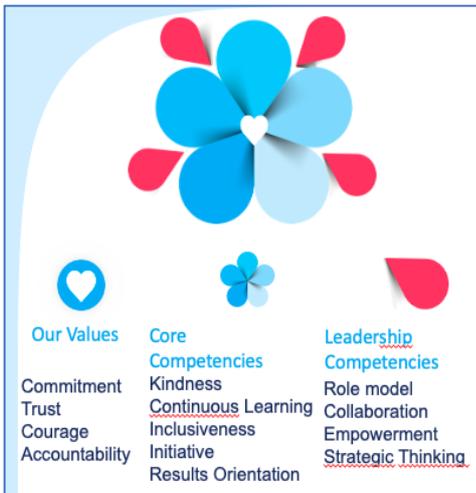
This, the new Code of Conduct, is built upon our values-based competency framework, which includes our federation values, the values-based core competencies and the values-based leadership competencies.

Promoting values-based conduct is an overarching component towards our 2030 strategic goal on safeguarding. Our values of **Commitment, Trust, Courage and Accountability**¹, together with the **key principles** associated, set out what is important to us as a Federation and the kind of organisation we are / seek to become.

Our four values are further elaborated in our competency framework² which sets out the nine competencies for all those working with / for SOS Children's Villages.

¹ As set out in "Who we are": [About Us - Our values \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

² See values-based competency framework "Living our Values": [Welcome to the Values-Based Competencies Collaboration Workspace \(sharepoint.com\)](#)



The core competences are Kindness, Continuous Learning, Inclusiveness, Initiative and Results Orientation, plus four specific competencies for those in a leadership position: Role model, Collaboration, Empowerment and Strategic Thinking.

Although competencies can be expressed as actions and behaviours, they are typically more generalised in nature and speak to the attributes, skills and attitudes. Just as the competencies link to the values of the organisation, the Code of Conduct links behaviours to the competencies and thus to the values of the Federation.

By establishing expectations regarding behaviours, the Code of Conduct supports the understanding of when behaviour is not acceptable and where action is needed to address such behaviour, prevent its reoccurrence and to provide support to those affected.

This includes promoting a culture where people feel free and able to speak out about what is happening and to hold themselves and others working with and for the Federation to account.

Link between Code of Conduct and other policies, regulations and guidance

While the Code of Conduct sets out expectations, based on our values (and competency framework) it not a standalone document. It links to other important regulations, policies and practices including:

- Who We Are – Mission Statement of SOS Children’s Villages
- SOS Care Promise
- Child Protection Policy
- Reporting and Responding Procedures for Child Protection
- Sexual Misconduct Regulation
- Gender Equality Policy
- Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Guideline
- Good Management and Accountability Quality standards
- Misconduct incident management regulation
- Misconduct investigation regulation
- HR Manual

Format of the Code of Conduct (B)

The Code of Conduct is framed around our values-based competency framework. Expected behaviours are the evidence of our values. Where there is any doubt as to the behaviour expected and required then the **key principles** (outlined at the start of the Code itself, Part 2) should be referred to for further guidance.

Application of the Code of Conduct (B)

Any breach of the Code of Conduct will be taken seriously and where necessary, in accordance with SOS Policies and Procedures and by-laws, and the relevant international and domestic laws, appropriate action will be taken both to address the situation including the needs of the persons affected and the persons responsible. It is also imperative to learn lessons so that such instances can be prevented in the future and so the review of safeguarding incidents forms part of the implementation of the Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct will be reviewed every three years, and not more than every five years, to assess its effectiveness and measure its implementation at the practical level.

Organisational commitment (B)

Although individuals have a responsibility to uphold the Code of Conduct, we recognise that as a Federation we have a responsibility to ensure that individuals are given the support and guidance to be able to meet their commitments under the Code of Conduct.

Key actions include providing training and orientation on the Code of Conduct; communicating the provisions of the Code of Conduct in appropriate ways to those who work with and for the Federation and those who come into contact with the Federation such as children, young people, families, communities and partners; and ensuring that people are aware of how to report concerns appropriately and safely.

These key actions include:

- Provide staff and others working with and for SOS Children's Villages with awareness raising, training and guidance on expected behaviours and the Code of Conduct. This may for some staff or roles require additional, specific, guidance.
- Communicate our Code of Conduct to children, young people, families, communities and partners and all others who come into contact with children and young people under our care so that they are aware of expectations and can help hold us to account.
- Continually strengthen and review policies and procedures to support the implementation of the Code of Conduct, such as those relating to Human Resources and financial management.
- Ensure everyone knows how to report, invite and welcome reports regarding suspected or actual breaches of the Code of Conduct. All such reports will be taken seriously and will be responded to, and action taken in line with our procedures. This includes providing appropriate ways for staff and others to raise concerns confidentially and safely and if they so choose anonymously about possible (and actual) breaches of the Code of Conduct.
- Protect staff and others making reports regarding breaches of the Code of Conduct from retaliation and other reprisals. Even if a reported breach is found to be unsubstantiated, SOS Children's Villages will not take any action against the person making the report provided it was made in good faith. Knowingly false and malicious reports constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct.
- Monitor the implementation of the Code of Conduct, including but not limited to checking of signing of the Commitment to the Code of Conduct, training and orientation for all those covered by the Code of Conduct and reviewing reported breaches of the Code of Conduct and trends.

The Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct sets out the expected behaviours that all those working with and on behalf of SOS Children's Villages **MUST** commit to follow.

Key principles (B)

Our Federation works in many different, and sometimes, difficult settings which present many challenges. Therefore in addition to building on our values, the following **key principles** are embedded in the expected behaviours expressed in the Code of Conduct. Where there is any doubt as to whether an action is acceptable, the key principles should be referred to:

- **DO NO HARM** so that the activities of SOS Children's Villages do not negatively impact on the lives of individuals, communities, staff and volunteers who come into contact with those working with and for SOS Children's Villages.
- **RESPECT** for all individuals and their dignity, including promoting and upholding **ALL RIGHTS** (including human rights and specific child rights) and international commitments relevant to our activities.³
- Promote **INCLUSION** and prevent all **discrimination of all kinds**, including, but not limited to, discrimination based on gender and/or gender expression, ethnicity, race, religion or belief, dis/ability, sexual orientation, caste, national and/or social origin both intentional and unintentional, both explicit and implicit biases to create more equitable relationships.
- Address unequal **POWER RELATIONS** which may manifest as abuse of power or other form of privilege or oppression based on age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, dis/ability, or race or religion or any other characteristic which may place an individual in a disadvantaged position.
- Promote **GENDER** equality to create an inclusive and equitable work environment through addressing gender biases and discrimination in recruitment, access to training and development, access to career progression, and gender segregation of roles.
- Value **CULTURAL DIFFERENCES and DIVERSITY** in order to reflect the realities and perspectives of where we work and in particular ensure that the way in which we work is inclusive and non-discriminatory and does not continue to promote or contribute to unequal power relations.
- **NON-VIOLENCE**, physical, sexual, emotional or verbal in all our actions, including child care and workplace misconduct.
- Observe and promote **INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS and BEST PRACTICES** across all work activities, including human rights and humanitarian principles, and comply with **ALL APPLICABLE LAWS** both domestic/national and international, while applying the highest standards at all times.
- Observe the highest standards of **INTEGRITY, ETHICAL STANDARDS AND PROFESSIONALISM**.
- Commitment to ecology, environment and biodiversity through our work and sharing of these with children, youth and communities. This means conducting work in an environmentally **SUSTAINABLE** manner, promoting eco-friendly practices.

³ These include Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979, (CEDAW), Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability, IASC Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Principles, IASC Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Minimum Operating Standards: Prevention from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Own Personnel, The Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (Number 190) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct - Reporting concerns and incidents

The Code of Conduct places a duty on all those working with or for SOS Children's Villages to report any concerns they have regarding possible or actual breaches of the Code of Conduct.

All and any incidents will be managed in accordance with our Misconduct Management regulations and other HR policies and procedures. It is not necessary to have proof or evidence, merely a concern that the Code of Conduct has been breached is sufficient.

A report can be made anonymously using the appropriate reporting channels. While understanding the desire to report anonymously, those reporting are strongly encouraged to provide their contact details. All details will be kept confidential. Providing such information will help ensure that the report can be followed-up if necessary so that it can be investigated thoroughly.

Numerous ways of reporting concerns are provided in the Misconduct Management regulations. These can be adapted to suit the specifics of local context. Therefore, those with a concern should use the identified and established reporting channels in their locations. In addition, reports can be made to SOS Children's Village using a dedicated email address and phone number (hotline), maintained by the Incident Management Team: misconduct@sos-kd.org (maintained by the IO), and, for example, misconduct-eucm@sos-kd.org, misconduct-wcna@sos-kd.org, etc. (maintained by individual IORs). Reports can also be made via the confidential whistleblowing channel (available [here](#) and [here](#).)

Provided a report is not malicious, no action will be taken against anyone making a report. Protection will be provided, where necessary, to prevent any retaliation against anyone making a report in good faith, including additional support where required.

Expectations of behaviour – by individual and from others (B)

The Code of Conduct MUST be complied with at all times.

- 1. I will always treat all those with whom I come into contact with as a result of my engagement with SOS Children's Villages with respect and dignity, and will uphold their privacy. This includes other staff, children, young people and their families, community members and representatives of partner organisations including suppliers and contractors.**

Specifically, but not limited to, this means:

- I will use empathetic and non-violent behaviour in action, language and gestures.
- I will not bully or harass, including sexually harass or verbally bully, anyone.
- I will never enter in a sexual relationship with a child or adult programme participant.
- I will not enter private spaces (bedrooms etc.) without permission and I will not carry out personal care for a child that they are able to do for themselves.

2. **I will respect the basic rights of all, regardless of gender, age, ability, health, language, ethnicity, race, colour, religion, caste, sexual orientation, gender identity, national or social origin and any other aspects of identity or personal characteristics.** I understand that my position within SOS Children's Villages and more generally within society can confer power on me which may limit the abilities of others to disagree or speak out.

Specifically, but not limited to, this means:

- I will always recognise where my power is an issue and actively try to limit its impact on others.
- I will empower others to participate by promoting equality, inclusion and diversity.
- I will seek to understand my own bias.
- I will never engage in an exploitative sexual relationship/marriage with anyone who is or has been a participant in SOS Children's Villages programmes or community members, including adults who were cared for by SOS as children.

3. **I will act fairly, honestly and tactfully and without favouritism or discrimination. This includes other staff, children, young people and their families, community members and representatives of partner organisations including suppliers and contractors.**

Specifically, but not limited to, this means:

- I will always establish and maintain clear and appropriate professional boundaries in my relationships with sponsors, service providers, contractors, colleagues, the children and young people and communities I serve.
- I will declare and disclose any conflicts of interests, including possible bias and relationship regarding a relative or a friend, and remove myself from any decision-making processes, including in relation to recruitment.
- I will not employ staff who are relatives or friends of those working for SOS Children's Villages unless it is demonstrated through fair recruitment practices that they are the best person for the job. I will not employ any blood, close relatives.⁴

4. **I will ensure that children and young people in the care of or in contact with SOS Children's Villages are kept safe and that all measures will be taken to prevent them from being harmed, abused or mistreated in any way.**

Specifically, but not limited to, this means:

- I will not use physical chastisement/corporal punishment to discipline children.
- I will ensure that children in my care are always properly supervised by appropriate adults
- I will always place the best interests of children as the primary consideration of all my actions.

5. **I will respect the national law and local culture, traditions, customs and practices as well as UN human rights treaties and other human rights instruments, and the policies and procedures of SOS Children's Villages, except where to do so will cause harm to others. In such cases I will immediately inform my line manager, supervisor or HR.**

⁴ This includes son, daughter, uncle, aunt, brother or sister.

Specifically, but not limited to, this means:

- Irrespective of the age of consent/majority in the country, I will always regard a child as anyone under the age of 18 years old.
- In addition to reporting under the Code of Conduct, where required under national law I will report all cases of abuse and harm, or criminal acts to the relevant authorities.

6. I recognise that the reputation of SOS Children’s Villages is of paramount importance but at the same time I acknowledge that safeguarding should always be the priority and that safeguarding concerns must be reported even if these appear to undermine the reputation of the Federation.

Specifically, but not limited to, this means:

- In any situation where I believe that the Code of Conduct may have been breached, I will immediately report my concerns using the appropriate channels, including where required national agencies.
- In an emergency situation I will take immediate necessary action in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of others in line with the key principles and spirit of the Code of Conduct.
- I will challenge (and report under the Code of Conduct where necessary) any form of direct or indirect discrimination, including gender inequality, harassment, or abuse (physical, sexual or verbal), intimidation or exploitation, or any other actions which infringe the rights of others.

7. I recognise that I am a representative for SOS Children’s Villages and in my behaviour, and in my interactions with partners, children, young people and families and other agencies and within the organisation, I will always seek to demonstrate the values of the organisation and to behave in a way that does not call into question the reliability and trustworthiness of SOS Children’s Villages.

Specifically, but not limited to, this means:

- I will observe the Code of Conduct at all times.
- I will work on behalf of SOS Children’s Villages and not engage in other activities which may be in conflict or competition – for example other employment unless permission is given by my manager/HR.
- I will not accept any personal favours, gifts, grants, contributions, donations, or other material rewards related to my status or functions in SOS Children’s Villages.
- I will not use resources of SOS Children’s Villages for any other than the purpose they were intended or for personal gain.
- I will not pay, in cash or kind, for any sexual services while on duty or representing SOS Children’s Villages.

8. I will ensure that safeguarding is a primary consideration and at the forefront of everything I do.

Specifically, but not limited to, this means:

- I will administer resources entrusted to me by SOS Children’s Villages in a transparent and appropriate manner and in compliance with established procedures that ensure optimum use of all material and human resources.
- I will only use all computers and other information technology responsibly and in full compliance with the relevant data protection and IT security laws, procedures, regulations and rules, and refrain from inappropriate usage, especially that relating to the creation, viewing, downloading or distribution of any inappropriate or offensive material, including, but not restricted to, abusive or exploitative images

of children, child sexual exploitation material (formerly termed “child pornography” or pornography in general).

- When responsible for the work of others, for example suppliers, vendors or contractors, I will make sure that they are properly supervised and adhere to the expected behaviours of the Code of Conduct.

9. I will keep confidentiality and share personal information of others only on a need-to-know basis, in accordance with data privacy and data protection procedures, regulations and rules.

Specifically, but not limited to this means:

- I will keep to all laws, rules and regulations regarding data protection and will seek guidance if I am not sure how these apply.
- I will only post images of and information about individuals in the context of SOS Children’s Villages on professional platforms (for example not personal Facebook pages) respecting limitations resulting from the scope of consent in place.
- I will ensure that permission is always obtained in advance and that any information, images etc. are not exploitative or demeaning.
- I will not communicate any sensitive or potentially damaging information to external bodies or individuals, including media representatives, without appropriate authorisation.

10. I acknowledge that within our workplaces and locations we are continually facing new circumstances and challenges and commit to the best of my ability to overcome challenges through flexible and strategic thinking and through working collaboratively with others, such as colleagues, partners, suppliers, contractors and community members (including children and young people).

Specifically, but not limited to, this means:

- I will actively initiate dialogue and open exchange wherever I can, and support and contribute to the efforts of others where necessary. This includes cooperating with my colleagues across functional areas and cultures.
- I will value and respect the perspectives, choices and views of others, even if I disagree. However if these perspectives, choices and views contradict a provision of this Code of Conduct I will report it to my line manager, supervisor or HR.
- I will respect everyone’s area of competence and try to promote and strengthen interdisciplinary work always for the benefit of children, young people and families.

11. If my role is that of a manager or leader, I understand that I have additional responsibilities to model the good behaviour promoted through this Code of Conduct in order to create an environment in which good conduct can flourish.

Specifically, but not limited to, this means:

- I will ensure that co-workers and persons associated with SOS Children’s Villages are aware of the code and are supported in putting it into practice.
- I will demonstrate leadership in promoting inclusion and equitable sharing of power and decision-making by men and women co-workers and others who may not traditionally have a voice or who may be marginalised.
- Where I am in a leadership position, I will act according to SOS Children’s Villages’ mission, vision and strategy and I will communicate the Federation’s values and mission to my team and others and

will make decisions that are consistent.

- I acknowledge that engaging in an intimate relationship with co-workers can lead to a conflict of interest, which must be avoided. To ensure a professional environment, I will work constructively with the organisation to find an equitable and non-discriminatory solution for those involved.

12. I will carry out my responsibilities with the highest standards of professionalism to the best of my competence and abilities and I will be honest with myself and others about what I can do, recognising my abilities and my limitations.

Specifically, but not limited to, this means

- I will seek opportunities to learn, including attending training as required and will ask for clarification, including if I am uncertain how to apply the Code of Conduct in my work setting.
- I will actively seek to understand and attend trainings to learn about my own individual biases and improve my practices so as not to discriminate against anyone.
- I will seek support from my manager/supervisor or HR if I feel that I am unable to properly carry out my duties/role for whatever reason and I will ask for help when I need it in order to maintain my well-being and ability to work effectively.
- I will ensure that my ability to do my job is not impaired by my behaviour, for example not working under the influence of intoxicating substances such as alcohol or any other non-prescribed drugs.
- I will always take responsibility for my actions and omissions.

I acknowledge that I have been given a copy of the Code of and I have read it.

Commitment to the Code of Conduct

(B)

(Note this is the suggested standard wording, however, it will need to be adapted to reflect any local legislation/employment conditions which may apply in country).

By signing this document I acknowledge that I have been given a copy of the Code and Conduct and give my commitment to adhere to the Code of Conduct.

I will adhere to the values, principles and competencies required in the Code of Conduct and I will comply with its provisions acting at all times in the best interest of the Federation and the children and young people under its care, adult programme participants, community members and all those working with or on behalf of SOS Children's Villages.

I recognise that situations may occur which are not covered by the Code of Conduct, and in which case I will work within the spirit of the Code of Conduct and to uphold the values and principles of SOS Children's Village which underpin the Code of Conduct.

I understand that although SOS Children's Villages offer training and orientation in order to understand the Code of Conduct, I have a personal responsibility to read and understand the Code of Conduct and to seek further guidance from my line manager/supervisor or HR if I am unclear at any time as to how the provisions of the Code of Conduct applies.

I acknowledge that any breaches in the Code of Conduct will be responded to in accordance with SOS Children's Villages policies, guidelines and best practice, and national laws. Depending on the gravity of the breach, SOS Children's Villages can initiate administrative actions, which may include further training and guidance, verbal and written warning; disciplinary action which may include suspension and in severe cases termination of employment/engagement; and/or referral to law enforcement agencies in cases involving allegations of criminal acts.

I confirm that I have read and understood the Code of Conduct and understand that a copy with my signature will be retained on file.

Name:

Signature:

Date: