

Antigua International School

CHILD SAFETY AND PROTECTION POLICY AND GUIDELINES

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Ensure that all AIS students are emotionally, physically, and psychologically safe at school.
- Provide definitions and guidelines to prevent child abuse of any form.
- Define procedures and protocols for staff members and establish clear reporting guidelines and responsibilities.
- Comply with Guatemalan child protection laws, specifically the Ley de Protección Integral de la Niñez y Adolescencia (Ley PINA, 2007).

Aim of the Policy

AIS seeks to ensure that all members of the school community:

- Contribute to the creation of safe environments for all students where they feel secure, valued, and listened to.
- Take appropriate actions when necessary.
- Identify students who are suffering or are likely to suffer harm.
- Communicate the school's commitment to safeguarding children.
- Are fully aware of referral procedures and guidelines.
- Monitor students at probable risk and involve outside agencies as needed.
- Provide parents/guardians with information to support child protection efforts.
- Ensure students know there are adults at school they can approach for help.

Scope of the Policy

Applies to all members of the AIS community: staff, parents/guardians, contractors, service providers, and visitors.

Policy Statement

AIS aligns its safeguarding policy with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) guidelines, and the Guatemalan law (Ley PINA). All staff members have an ethical and professional obligation to safeguard students, report suspected abuse or neglect, and follow internal and legal protocols. Administrators will act diligently to ensure the safety of all students, including reporting to MINEDUC or the appropriate authorities.

AIS commits to:

- Publishing and regularly updating this policy.
- Training all staff annually.
- Implementing safe hiring practices.

- Reviewing the policy annually and after any incident.
- Providing whistleblower protection for staff who report concerns in good faith.

Procedures

Hiring and Recruitment

- All applicants must undergo thorough reference and criminal background checks, including RENAS certification for local hires.
- References must specifically comment on the candidate's suitability to work with children.
- AIS will explore the use of International Child Protection Certificates (ICPC) or equivalent for international hires.
- Job postings and application materials will include explicit statements of AIS's commitment to child protection.

Staff Conduct and Boundaries (Code of Conduct)

- Staff must not engage in private digital communication or social media connections with students.
- Any digital or virtual contact with students, including online tutoring, individual lessons, or messaging, must take place through official school platforms and remain transparent and observable, with a parent/guardian or second adult able to access the communication. One-to-one private digital contact is not permitted.
- Staff must adhere to strict guidelines on overnight trips/excursions (e.g., student-to-adult ratios, sleeping arrangements, two-adult supervision).
- Staff must adhere to transportation guidelines, including no driving of students alone off campus. Carpooling with one's own children and their friends is permitted only when the staff member's own child is present.
- Two-adult expectation: The two-adult expectation is a core standard of this policy. While recognized as a guideline rather than an absolute rule, it must be maintained to the highest possible level of fidelity. Staff should not be alone with a student in a private or unobservable space, and any unavoidable exception should be brief, visible to others, and documented where appropriate.

Reporting and Response

- All staff are legally obligated to report suspected abuse or neglect.
- Reports must be made within 48 hours to a Child Protection Officer or designated leadership.
- Internal reporting does not replace legal reporting obligations. Where required by Guatemalan law, AIS will report to MINEDUC and the appropriate authorities, and designated leadership is responsible for making such external reports.
- Anonymous reporting mechanism: AIS maintains a digital form accessible to students, staff, and parents.
- Timelines: Reports are acknowledged within 24 hours, and investigations are initiated promptly.
- Confidentiality is strictly maintained.
- Concerns involving harm between students (peer-to-peer) are addressed in accordance with the AIS student handbook.

Monitoring and Review

- Annual safeguarding audit (internal or external) with follow-up actions tracked by leadership.
- Policy is reviewed annually and after any incident to incorporate lessons learned.
- AIS benchmarks against NEASC, ICMEC, and ISI safeguarding standards.

Child Protection Officers and Committee (CPC)

The designated Child Protection Officers are the General Director, the Director of Operations and Compliance, the Technical Director, and the School Counselors, with Principals involved as needed. Together they form the Child Protection Committee (CPC), which is responsible for implementing, ensuring compliance with, and monitoring this policy. The CPC ensures safe reporting channels, provides annual training, conducts compliance reviews, and liaises with outside agencies.

General Guidelines

- Community Awareness: Publish policy on the website, include in handbooks, and provide regular communication to parents.
- Staff Training: Annual training on types of abuse, signs, prevention, reporting, and laws.
- Student Awareness: Programs on personal safety, bullying prevention, digital safety, and how to report concerns.
- Facilities & Security: Safe campus environment with access controls, surveillance in common areas, strict visitor protocols, and safety measures on excursions.

Accountability

- Reports of abuse and investigations are documented, confidential, and securely stored.
- Annual report submitted to the Board of Trustees and shared via Padlet.
- Staff are protected from retaliation when reporting in good faith.