

## Child Protection Policy

Updated February 4, 2021

### I. Policy Statement

Accountability Counsel recognizes that the welfare and interests of children must be paramount in all circumstances. Accountability Counsel has the responsibility to safeguard and protect the welfare of children where our activities come into contact with children or have an impact on children, and is thus committed to protecting children in all of our activities.

Accountability Counsel is committed to ensuring that our child protection practices comply with best practice and that regardless of age, disability, gender identity, race, national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, or socio-economic background, all children have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

### II. Definitions

A **child** is defined as any person who is under the age of eighteen years.

**Child abuse** and **harm** occur when a child is intentionally harmed by an adult or by another child over a period of time or as a one-off event. Abuse and harm can be physical, sexual, emotional, or in the form of neglect, and can happen in person or online.

**Child Protection Focal Point** is the person(s) with knowledge and skills to promote child-safe environments and respond to concerns and disclosures, as currently identified in Annex A.

### III. Commitments

#### Accountability Counsel's Child Protection Policy

Accountability Counsel makes the following commitments to protect the welfare of all children who come into contact with the organization:

- a) To clearly inform all team members, Board members, volunteers, or other representatives of Accountability Counsel policies and processes that keep children safe, in particular through the team, Board, and volunteer induction processes;
- b) To ensure that all team members, Board members, volunteers, or other representatives fully understand their child protection roles and responsibilities, including the reporting procedures described in Section IV of this policy;
- c) To have robust recruitment processes that check that people are suitable to act in their roles;
- d) To have at least one named Child Protection Focal Point;
- e) To obtain written parental permission before allowing anyone under 18 years old to work or intern at Accountability Counsel;

- f) To provide team members, Board members, volunteers, or other representatives with learning opportunities, in ways that are appropriate and relevant to their roles, to recognize, identify, and respond to child protection concerns and disclosures;
- g) To promote a fair, open, and positive culture and ensure all involved feel able to report concerns and confident that they will be heard and responded to;
- h) To accurately record and safely store all confidential information, whether associated with the organization's activities or with any potential disclosures of policy violation;
- i) To conduct periodic reviews of child protection policies, procedures, and practice;
- j) Failure to adhere to this policy may be grounds for termination and/or termination of contract.

### **Accountability Counsel Code of Conduct**

The following code of conduct applies to all Accountability Counsel team members, Board members, volunteers, or other representatives whenever they are working for or representing the organization:

- a) Team members, Board members, volunteers, or other representatives interacting with children, either online or in person, shall do so in a lawful, respectful manner that promotes the children's safety and well-being;
- b) Team members, Board members, volunteers, or other representatives shall obtain consent before taking photographs or filming children for any organizational use, which shall itself be in accordance with Accountability Counsel's Respect-Based Approach. When working for or representing Accountability Counsel, team members, Board members, volunteers, or other representatives shall not take any photographs or film of children for personal use;
- c) Team members, Board members, volunteers, or other representatives shall take steps to ensure that all children who attend events in the course of Accountability Counsel's activities are kept safe;
- d) Team members, Board members, volunteers, or other representatives shall avoid being alone with a non-related child whenever possible, and no team member or other representative may use social media to contact children they have met through their work after working hours or for non-work purposes;
- e) Team members, Board members, volunteers, or other representatives shall not have sexual relations with anyone under the age of eighteen years old, or with any young person of or over eighteen years who is connected with Accountability Counsel's programs, per the organization's Fraternalization policy in Section II: Employment Policies of the Employee Handbook;
- f) Team members, Board members, volunteers, or other representatives shall report all child protection concerns and disclosures in accordance with Section IV of this Policy (including any historical unreported concern or disclosure);
- g) Team members, Board members, volunteers, or other representatives shall promote the safety and well-being of children at all times.

## **IV. Reporting**

All Accountability Counsel team members, Board members, volunteers, or other representatives are obligated to report any concerns, whether witnessed or disclosed, about alleged or suspected abuse or harm of any child who is in contact with or impacted by Accountability Counsel's operations immediately to Accountability Counsel's Child Protection Focal Point or the Executive Director. Instances that must be reported include, but are not limited to:

1. Observation of instances of child abuse or harm or other concerning behavior by an Accountability Counsel team member or partner;
2. Any report of child abuse or harm whether by a partner, project worker, or contractor, or other person, in the course of Accountability Counsel's activities.

Reports may be made anonymously and the reporting individual will not be subject to any retaliation by the organization for their report, as is protected in Accountability Counsel's Whistleblower Policy.

Reporting of concerns should take place as soon as practicable, allowing for time differences in different countries. Failure by an employee to report any observations or disclosures they have received will be addressed without delay and may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including termination and/or termination of their contract with the organization, per Accountability Counsel's Discipline policy in Section II: Employment Policies of the Employee Handbook.

The Child Protection Focal Point and the Executive Director are responsible for ensuring that all suspected or actual child protection issues are responded to appropriately and consistently, including by reference to relevant agencies. All concerns raised will be taken seriously and action will be taken to support and protect children who have suffered abuse or harm. Where Accountability Counsel's Executive Director determines that a serious incident has occurred, the incident must be reported without delay to the Board.

### **In the Event of a Disclosure**

If someone discloses an incident or raises a concern of abuse, the Accountability Counsel team members, Board members, volunteers or other representatives to whom the disclosure has been made is encouraged to:

- Remain calm and in control.
- Listen attentively and carefully, and clarify their understanding where necessary.
- Not offer their own views or opinions.
- Explain that they must share the information to protect the welfare of the child but that they will take into account how the person disclosing the information wishes it to be shared.

- Reassure the person raising the concern that they have done the right thing by disclosing the matter.
- Immediately report the incident through Accountability Counsel's reporting procedures.
- Refer the matter to a relevant emergency service or other child protection organization if the child is in immediate danger.

## **V. Confidentiality and Information Sharing**

All Accountability Counsel team members, Board members, volunteers, or other representatives must be aware that, while they have a duty to keep any information about children, families, and colleagues confidential, they may also have a legal and professional responsibility to share information with relevant agencies, if it is necessary to protect children.

When information is shared within the organization, confidentiality must be maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with child protection concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be kept secure at all times and shared only with those who are necessary for handling the case. Accountability Counsel will ensure that confidential, detailed, and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored.

## **Annex A**

The current Child Protection Focal Point is Lani Inverarity, Director of Programs and Strategy.