



# VOLUNTEER CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE



Irish Foster Care Association



# ***VOLUNTEER CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE***

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Irish Foster Care Association

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# Foreword

*The Irish Foster Care Association recognises that the welfare of all persons involved with the Association and our programmes is paramount. The Association is committed to ensuring that each individual is guaranteed a working environment, which recognises that individual's right to be treated with dignity both by management, board, staff and fellow volunteers. In line with this the Association has collated a Volunteer Code of Good Practice for the organisation.*

*This Code of Good Practice document is designed to help us to help you to understand how we need to work together to protect and serve all our members; foster and relative carers, social and child care workers, academics, others with an interest in foster care, volunteers and staff.*

*This document outlines the fundamental principles and addresses issues relating to the roles and responsibilities of volunteers involved with the Association and our programmes. The Irish Foster Care Association Code of Good Practice aims to promote best practice and to provide a safe and enjoyable environment for all.*

*We put a high value on the work of our volunteers. Our programmes would not succeed without the amazing and ongoing volunteer work taking place all over the country in our branches and regions, with our support workers, telephone helpline volunteers and trainers. While our heavy reliance on volunteers is acknowledged there is an onus on all volunteers to ensure their activities and responsibilities are accountable, fulfilled and completed in accordance with the rules, policies and procedures of the Association.*

*We would like to take this opportunity to welcome you on board as a volunteer with the Irish Foster Care Association. The Association aims to encourage an open and communicative relationship that promotes continuous self-development and a supportive volunteer working environment to help you to realise your career potential and maintain a high level of volunteer job satisfaction.*

*As a volunteer you will play an essential role in helping us to realise our objectives. We hope that you will enjoy volunteering with us over the coming years and we look forward to providing you with the guidance and support required that will allow you to achieve your own personal goals and objectives in line with our business practice. Please take the time to read this document and if you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us in the Irish Foster Care Association. This literature is designed to inform, enlighten and guard the safety of all our members... including you.*

*Thank you*

*Diarmuid Kearney  
CEO, Irish Foster Care Association*

# Introduction

This code outlines the fundamental principles and addresses issues relating to the roles and responsibilities of all volunteers involved in our programmes. It outlines your rights as well as responsibilities as a volunteer.

IFCA is committed to implementing and promoting measures to protect the dignity of those that work and volunteer within the Association, and to encourage respect for others at work. This is achieved by creating a work environment that is free from bullying, harassment and sexual harassment, racism and disrespectful behavior, by dealing effectively with any complaints of such conduct, and also by welcoming diversity and promoting equality. This policy is applicable to all volunteers in the Association. Volunteers are obliged to be aware of the effect their own behavior may have on others. Our policies and procedures underpin the principles of this Code of Good Practice but to receive full detailed copies of all IFCA Policies and Procedures please contact the IFCA Office.

Given the complexity and constantly changing nature of our work and our world, no book of hard and fast rules, however long and detailed, could ever adequately cover all dilemmas people face. In this context every person who acts on our behalf is asked to take responsibility for ethical decision-making. If anyone has any doubt regarding the interpretation or application of the Code, then they should consult with the CEO/Company Secretary/Head of Operations or Chairperson of IFCA.

## Intended Audience

This document is for use by all volunteers involved in all aspects of the Irish Foster Care Association programmes throughout Ireland. It is the responsibility of all persons involved in the organisation to familiarise themselves with the Irish Foster Care Association Code of Good Practice in its entirety as all volunteers within the organisation have a duty and responsibility to uphold this code.

# Mission, Ethos & Core Values



The following section identifies the mission, ethos and values that are central to the Irish Foster Care Association and its programmes.

## *Mission Statement*

The Irish Foster Care Association is a 'rights based', child centred organisation which promotes family based solutions for children and young people in 'out of home care'. The Irish Foster Care Association believes in the highest standard of excellence in all foster care services and is committed to achieving its goal through advocacy, support, education and working in a spirit of partnership and co-operation.

## *Ethos and Core Values*

- 1 Working in a respectful, open and transparent way.
- 2 In equality and inclusiveness and a non-judgemental approach to our work.
- 3 Promotion of a partnership approach between all parties involved in the foster care system.
- 4 Collective responsibility in our work.

## *Who is IFCA?*

- ✓ We are a non for profit voluntary organisation
- ✓ We are an independent, membership led organisation and have a role in advocating and campaigning for change.

## *Who do we represent?*

The IFCA membership is broad based and includes:

- ✓ General/Relative Foster Carers who have contracts with Tusla and private/independent fostering agencies
- ✓ Social/child care workers
- ✓ Academics and others with an interest in foster care

# Recruitment, Selection & Training

## *Recruitment and Selection*

Volunteers are a very important asset of the Irish Foster Care Association; they play an important part in executing the work of the Association. IFCA recognises that it is crucial to recruit volunteers with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to work on its behalf.

All potential volunteers must adhere to the following recruitment and selection process:

1. Receive a written, clear definition of the volunteer role.
2. Complete the appropriate written application form or depending on the role, be nominated by a committee i.e Branch and Regional Officer.
3. Partake in an informal interview
4. Have the ability to commit to a minimum of 2 years in the role.

Depending on the role it may be necessary to undergo the following:

1. Garda vetting. All IFCA volunteers who may have contact with children in their roles must have up to date Garda Vetting and must inform the IFCA CEO of any allegation, current or past together with details of the status and/or outcome of any Garda and/or Tulsa investigation which may impact on IFCA.
2. Reference checks from two non-family referees

## *Training*

IFCA also acknowledges the importance of valuing and supporting its volunteers and training and reimbursing them appropriately for the roles they do. IFCA provides appropriate processes of supervision and appraisal to enable volunteers to perform their roles efficiently and consistently and realise their potential.

All potential volunteers must undergo the following training process:

1. General induction training i.e. who is IFCA, Volunteer Code of Good Practice Guide etc.
2. Job Specific Role training

3. Ongoing job specific training. Depending on the role, for example:
  - I. Branch and Regional Committee Team Development Training
  - II. Support worker and Helpline training i.e. Certificate in counselling and psychotherapeutic skills & practice
  - III. Peer Support Group Facilitator training
4. Depending on the role, ongoing supervision.

### *Volunteer Opportunities*

1. Branch and Regional Officer
2. Regional Representative
3. Peer Support Group Facilitator
4. Support Worker
5. Telephone Helpline Volunteer
6. IFCA Trainer

This is not an exhausted list please go to [www.ifca.ie](http://www.ifca.ie)

# Code of Good Practice

This section provides information on the Irish Foster Care Association Code of Good Practice for all volunteers within the organisation.

## *Rights of Volunteers*

Volunteers have the right to

- ✓ be treated with dignity and respect as a co-worker, not just as free help
- ✓ be given as much information about the organisation as possible, including information on our policies, procedures and programmes
- ✓ have adequate training and supervision provided to ensure he/she completes their roles to the best of their ability
- ✓ attend a place of work that is orderly, conducive to work and worthy of the job to be done, is safe and complies with health & safety regulations
- ✓ have the freedom to make suggestions and receive good feedback that shows respect for their opinion
- ✓ make complaints and have an effective complaints procedure
- ✓ be assigned to a role (if possible) that recognises his/her personal preference, life experience, education and employment background as well as recognising the needs of the organisation

## *Volunteer Code of Good Practice*

Volunteers have a responsibility and must agree to uphold the following Code of Good Practice

- ✓ To comply fully with the volunteer registration process and receive clearance when necessary from national office to work as a volunteer in certain programmes.
- ✓ To ensure that their attitude and behaviour towards other volunteers, members and staff at all times respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being.
- ✓ Be committed to, believe in and represent the Irish Foster Care Association mission, culture and values as outlined on page 5.
- ✓ To abide by the Irish Foster Care Association policies and procedures particular to their role.
- ✓ To participate in ongoing training as provided and regular supervision when necessary.
- ✓ To keep all confidential information entrusted to them completely secret and not use or attempt to disclose any confidential information in any manner to any other person or agency/organisation unless you are required to do so as required under legislation.

- ✓ To have a flexible approach to the work in response to organisational change.
- ✓ To maintain regular contact and work closely and in partnership with the IFCA office.
- ✓ To keep up to date on national issues and proactively advocate and represent IFCA's views/standpoints in relation to fostering where appropriate.
- ✓ To work as part of a solution focused team within their area.
- ✓ To adopt a partnership approach and maintain good working relationships in their activities.
- ✓ To promote good practice and excellence in foster care in their activities in accordance with the rules, policies and procedures of the Association.
- ✓ To seek to apply a non-judgemental, objective and unbiased approach when working with people.
- ✓ To have an empathic and respectful approach.
- ✓ To ensure the reputation of IFCA be upheld at all times with government departments and agencies, regulatory and statutory bodies, IFCA members, all parties with whom we have dealings and do business and members of the public.
- ✓ To conduct their duties at all times in a professional manner, maintaining the highest standards of integrity, honesty and conduct, together with adherence to all applicable laws, rules, regulations made by any official regulatory body and the Operation Procedures of IFCA.

YOU  
CAN  
HELP



While it is acknowledged that IFCA programmes rely heavily on volunteers, there is an onus on all volunteers to ensure their activities and responsibilities are accountable, fulfilled and completed in accordance with the rules, policies and procedures of the Association.

Conflicts of Interest: IFCA recognises that due to the voluntary nature of their work, volunteers may be employed elsewhere or have commitments/be involved with other employers and/or organisations. Acknowledging this, it is expected that all IFCA volunteers will do everything to avoid potential conflict with the interests of IFCA. If there is a potential conflict of interest, individuals may continue their membership of IFCA but may not hold a voluntary position within IFCA.

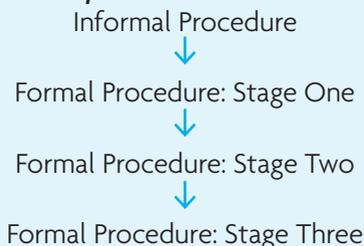
# Complaints, Disciplinary and Appeals Procedures

The following section identifies the system to manage complaints, disciplinary and appeals issues within the organisation.

## *The Process and Management of Complaints/Grievances*

The purpose of a complaints/grievances procedure is to ensure that all volunteers within IFCA have a fair forum in which to express any problems or concerns they may have and to have them resolved quickly and satisfactorily. The overall intention is to ensure that minor matters do not develop into major disputes.

### **Diagram: Complaints/Grievances Pathway**



If discussing the issue informally does not result in an acceptable outcome, you should then evoke the formal procedure stage one and so on. Stage three is final.

### **Informal Procedure:**

The company recognises that good communication and a willingness to cooperate will help to resolve issues quickly and smoothly. The Irish Foster Care Association encourages all its volunteers to initially attempt to resolve any issue at local level through informal discussions with the relevant person before engaging in any formal procedure. If discussing the issue informally does not result in an acceptable outcome, you should then evoke the formal procedure as outlined below.

### **Formal Procedure:**

#### **Stage One:**

- ✓ If a complaint is in relation to activities within our branch and regional structure the Volunteer is encouraged to meet with either the Branch/Regional Chairperson or the Regional Representative for their area when a

grievance first arises. If it is not in relation to the above or if they feel they cannot approach either of these people, an IFCA staff member responsible for their programme area should be contacted.

- ✓ The volunteer has the option to have a colleague or friend present.
- ✓ The problem is discussed and outcome decided upon.
- ✓ Meeting is recorded and signed - by both parties, with copies issued to those in attendance.

### ***Stage Two:***

- ✓ Should the volunteer be dissatisfied with the previous outcome, they can approach the IFCA Head of Operations to hear the grievance; this may be done verbally or in written form.
- ✓ Again the volunteer is given the option to have a representative present in the form of a colleague or friend.
- ✓ A discussion will be held and a response given within five working days.
- ✓ Meeting is recorded and signed by both parties, with copies issued to those in attendance

A summary of this meeting will be recorded.

### ***Stage Three:***

- ✓ If the matter is not resolved at Stage 2 the matter can be referred onto the IFCA CEO or, if they feel they cannot approach the CEO an external independent consultant may be appointed to hear the grievance. This may be done verbally or in written form.
- ✓ Again the volunteer is given the option to have a representative present in the form of a colleague or friend.
- ✓ A discussion will be held and a response given within five working days. The decision will be final.
- ✓ Meeting is recorded and signed by both parties, with copies issued to those in attendance.

A summary of this meeting will be recorded.

## ***The Process and Management of Disciplinary Procedures***

The disciplinary procedure of the Company is designed to help and encourage all volunteers to achieve and maintain high standards of conduct, job performance and capability.

The disciplinary procedure aims to help volunteers whose performance or conduct falls below the service requirements to achieve the necessary improvement. Formal procedures are vital to ensure consistent and fair disciplinary action at all times. While it is acknowledged that all IFCA programmes are being run by volunteers who are unpaid, there is an onus on all volunteers to ensure their activities and responsibilities are accountable, fulfilled and run in accordance with the rules, policies and procedures of the Association. Although the organisation would hope not to have to invoke formal procedures of any kind, unfortunately there are certain areas where disciplinary action may be required. These include:

- a) **Poor Job Performance/Capability:**  
This relates to the volunteer's ability and application to carry out the role they have been assigned to do. Disciplinary action in this area will only be initiated once the volunteer is clear and understands what is expected of them.
- b) **Misconduct:**  
This applies where it is alleged that there is some fault or blame on the part of the volunteer concerned through a breach of the Company's standards of behaviour and rules and regulations. This can include disruptive behaviour or any other act which the Company considers to be a breach of the standards of required discipline.
- c) **Gross Misconduct:**  
This refers to gross breaches of conduct, i.e. where it is alleged that a volunteer has deliberately broken Company rules and regulations or standards of behaviour. This may include, bullying, sexual harassment, fraud, theft, or any other serious offence. Any serious offences could result in removal from the volunteer role. Please refer to the list below.

The following are examples of misconduct and gross misconduct but this list is not exhaustive.

### ***Misconduct:***

- ✓ Failure to comply with a reasonable request
- ✓ Abusive or insulting behaviour and/or language to fellow volunteers/staff
- ✓ The taking of or being under the influence of alcohol or un-prescribed drugs during volunteering working hours.
- ✓ Failure to comply with written instructions
- ✓ Unacceptable performance
- ✓ Persistent failure to reach volunteer role requirements
- ✓ Persistent and unacceptable levels of absence
- ✓ Breach of policies and procedures
- ✓ Undertaking volunteer work in conflict with the Company

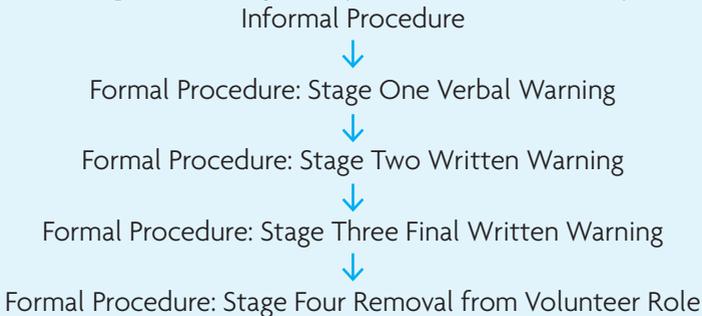
- ✓ Unauthorised access to Company premises
- ✓ Breach of confidentiality



### **Gross Misconduct:**

- ✓ Repeated or Serious Breach of confidentiality
- ✓ Submitting or entering of false/misleading information.
- ✓ Refusal to obey a reasonable instruction from someone authorised to issue such instructions
- ✓ Stealing from the Company or fellow colleagues
- ✓ Horseplay (joking, clowning, rowdiness or fun) that could lead to a possible mishap or accident
- ✓ Bullying/Harassment
- ✓ Sexual Harassment
- ✓ Serious or persistent acts of sexual, racial, religious or disability discrimination
- ✓ Continued failure to observe the dignity of others
- ✓ Physical and verbal assault
- ✓ Continued failure to attend a disciplinary hearing
- ✓ Repeated failure to comply with reasonable requests
- ✓ Non-compliance with Health and Safety procedures
- ✓ Neglect of safety standards
- ✓ Repeated breach of policies and procedures
- ✓ Solicitation of Irish Foster Care Association clients and information for personal business

### **Diagram: Disciplinary Procedure Pathway**



If the matter is not resolved through the informal procedure the formal procedure stage one is evoked and so on. Stage four is final.

### ***Informal Process Stage:***

At this early stage, the main aim of the procedure is to help the volunteer achieve the required standard of performance or behaviour. As mentioned it would be the organisation's aim to be able to resolve issues at this stage and not invoke any formal procedures.

However, depending on the nature of the matter it is up to an IFCA staff member responsible for the programme area and/or IFCA Head of Operations to decide whether or not to initiate this procedure. It can be in the form of a supervision meeting and they will;

- ✓ Informally meet with the volunteer to discuss with them the unacceptable behaviour or underperformance.
- ✓ Agree on improvement measures and the timeframe for these improvements.
- ✓ Offer to support and coach the volunteer in improving their performance.
- ✓ Decide on a date to review the progress.
- ✓ Inform the volunteer in a clear manner of the next steps in the procedure if agreed standards of improvement are not achieved.
- ✓ Maintain a record of the meetings held.

### ***Formal Process Stage:***

This disciplinary procedure allows for warnings to be given for failure to meet company standards of job performance and conduct. The disciplinary procedure may be initiated for a number of reasons. Examples of misconduct and gross misconduct are outlined above.

### ***Disciplinary meetings:***

Disciplinary meetings will be held with the volunteer so that the volunteer can respond. Management will never give a warning or decide on the level of a warning until after this meeting takes place and the volunteer is given a fair hearing under the principles of natural justice. The meeting will always be adjourned and all aspects considered before a discipline or warning is imposed. A discipline/ warning may not be imposed if the volunteer's response is satisfactory. The warnings outlined below are for guidance purposes only.

### ***Stage One – Verbal Warning:***

The IFCA Head of Operations will convene a disciplinary meeting. The volunteer will be given the opportunity to state their case.

The meeting will be adjourned to decide what course of action will be taken, the volunteer and their representative will be asked to re-join the meeting and they will be informed of the decision. (See information above relating to disciplinary meetings) The verbal warning should be given by the Head of Operations. The Head of Operations will inform the volunteer:

1. What the issue/matter is
2. What action or improvement is required from the volunteer
3. Set a date for review meeting
4. What will happen if there is no improvement made by the volunteer

The verbal warning will be issued verbally and in writing and in duplicate, a copy of which the volunteer will be asked to sign. This should be returned to the Head of Operations. This verbal warning remains active for a period of 6 (six) months. The warning will be issued by the Head of Operations to the volunteer in the presence of another person. All warnings issued can be appealed, please see below for the appeals process.

### ***Stage Two– Written Warning:***

If the matter is not resolved at stage one stage two is initiated. The same process as stage one is applied however the warning is in writing and remains active for a period of 12 (twelve) months.

### ***Stage Three – Final Written Warning:***

If the matter is not resolved at stage two stage three is initiated. The same process as stage two is applied.

### ***Stage Four – Removal from volunteer Role:***

If there are further breaches of discipline after the third stage or if an incident is so serious that the matter cannot be dealt with at stages 2 or 3, then the company may decide to remove the volunteer from their role. The process for dismissal is:

1. An appropriate investigation and consideration by the CEO
2. A meeting with the CEO, the volunteer and their representative in order to dismiss the volunteer
3. Outline the company position to the volunteer
4. Consideration to be given by the CEO to the volunteer and their representative's position.

The dismissal will be issued in writing and will include information on the appeals process.

### ***Volunteers Rights:***

At each stage of the disciplinary procedure, volunteers have the right:

- ✓ To be informed of the complaint against them and be given sufficient opportunity to present their case and call witnesses to support their case, as appropriate.
- ✓ To be accompanied to disciplinary meetings by a representative (this can be in the form of a colleague or friend)
- ✓ To be given an opportunity to present their case before a decision regarding the discipline to be imposed is reached.
- ✓ To normally not be removed from role for a first offence, other than gross misconduct.
- ✓ To be informed and encouraged to use the right of appeal.

### ***Appeals Process:***

- ✓ An appeal should be made by the volunteer to the CEO in writing within two weeks of the disciplinary action been taken.
- ✓ An appeals panel will be set up to investigate the appeal. This panel will consist of members from the Board.
- ✓ The person hearing the appeal should not have a previous knowledge of the matter.
- ✓ A meeting will take place within two weeks of the application to appeal the disciplinary decision.
- ✓ The outcome of the appeals process will be issued to the volunteer in writing within one week.

# Child Protection & Welfare Concerns



The Irish Foster Care Association is committed to safeguarding the rights of young people. This section outlines the principles which guide the responses of all volunteers to concerns that may arise regarding the welfare and protection of children and young people who may be involved with or use the services of the organisation. Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children published by the Department of Health and Children in 2011 form the basis of our association's child protection policy and procedures. Please contact the IFCA office for the full version of IFCA's Child Protection Policy Document if you require further details.

The Irish Foster Care Association does not in the main work directly with children and young people however, our annual conference weekend incorporates a children's programme, and there is no restriction on a child or young person contacting our Office or any IFCA volunteer/staff member.

## *Confidentiality*

Confidentiality is about treating sensitive information that arises in a trusting relationship and doing so in a manner that is respectful, professional and purposeful.

- ✓ All information regarding concern or assessment of child abuse will be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the best interests of the child.
- ✓ No undertakings of secrecy can be given. Those involved with a young person and family should make this clear to all parties concerned.
- ✓ Sharing information with others, in accordance with the reporting procedures set out within this policy, in the protection of a young person is not a breach of confidentiality.
- ✓ Parents and young people have a right to know if personal information about them is being held on file and being shared, unless doing so could put the young person at further risk.
- ✓ Information which is gathered for one purpose must not be used for another without consulting the person who provided that information.

- ✓ All records regarding young people and child protection matters will be kept in a safe and confidential manner within the IFCA Office and access to these records is strictly limited to the Designated Liaison Person.

## *Recognising Signs of Abuse*

Please refer to IFCA's Child Protection Policy Document for further details.

## *Designated Liaison Person*

The IFCA Support Service Development Worker, Peter O'Toole is the Designated Liaison Person. The Deputy Liaison Person is the IFCA CEO, Diarmuid Kearney. National Office phone number is 01 4599 474.

Role of Designated Liaison Person –

- ✓ Receives and considers all child protection concerns.
- ✓ Maintains contact with appropriate authorities in Community Services, Child and Family Agency and An Garda Síochána.
- ✓ Ensures IFCA Policy/Procedures relating to child protection are followed where reasonable grounds for concerns exist about individual children.
- ✓ Provides information and advice on protection and welfare within IFCA and manages referrals to Child and Family Agency, with adequate confidential information.
- ✓ Ensures confidentiality/safe recording of child protection issues and of individual case histories.
- ✓ Provides advice on child protection training.

## *Responding to a Child's Disclosure of Abuse*

In a situation where a child, in person or over the phone, talks about their being abused, the following actions need to be taken;

- ✓ Respond calmly. Do not panic
- ✓ Take the child seriously
- ✓ Understand that the child is taking a risk talking to you. Be aware that disclosure can be very difficult for the child
- ✓ Remember the child may initially be testing your reactions and may only fully open up over a period of time.

- ✓ Listen to what the child has to say. Give them the time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able and wish to. Do not pressurise the child. Allow him/her to disclose at their own pace and in their own language
- ✓ Be careful when asking questions. Questions should be supportive and for the purpose of clarification. Avoid leading questions such as asking whether a specific person carried out the abuse. Also, avoid asking about intimate details or suggesting that something else could have happened, other than what you have been told. Such questions and suggestions could complicate the official investigation
- ✓ It is important that the adult differentiates in their own mind between the person who carried out the abuse and the act of abuse itself. The child, quite possibly, may love or strongly like the alleged abuser while also disliking what was done to him/her. It is important therefore to avoid expressing any judgement on, or anger towards, the alleged perpetrator, while talking with the child.
- ✓ Clarify if the child is in danger at the moment, and for how long they think they will be safe. If the child is in the office or in your presence, ask if they can wait while you talk to the Designated Liaison Person
- ✓ It may be necessary to reassure the child that your feelings towards him/her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what she/he has disclosed
- ✓ Tell the child That you believe them. False disclosures are very rare.
- ✓ Do not promise to keep secrets. Explain to the child that you will only tell the people that really need to know so that they are kept safe. By refusing to make a commitment to secrecy to the child, you do run the risk that they may not tell you everything or indeed anything, there and then. However, it is better to do this than to tell a lie and ruin the child's confidence in yet another adult. By being honest, it is more likely, that the child will return to you at another time.
- ✓ You need to talk to the Designated Liaison Person about the best way to help the child out.
- ✓ You or the Designated Liaison Person will make contact to talk about what to do - establish the safest way to do that (if on the phone, will the child ring back or can you ring the child?) and specify the shortest time frame possible. Is the child happy to talk to your line manager?
- ✓ Ask if the child thinks they will be safe until you are in contact again.
- ✓ Ensure the child understands what you propose to do.

At the earliest possible opportunity;

- ✓ Record in writing what the child has said, including, as far as possible, the exact wording used by the child.
- ✓ Inform the Designated Liaison Person immediately.

Ongoing support;

Following a disclosure by a child, it is important that the IFCA member involved continues in a supportive relationship with the child particularly through;

- ✓ Maintaining a positive relationship with the child
- ✓ Keeping lines of communication open by listening carefully to the child
- ✓ Continue to include the child in the usual activities.
- ✓ Any further disclosure should be treated as a first disclosure and responded to as in reporting procedures in this policy

### *The Reporting Procedure*

1. Any volunteer who has a concern about a child currently being abused, abused in the past, or likely to be at risk of abuse, is obliged to verbally relay their concern to the Designated Liaison Person as a matter of urgency.
2. In situations where the Designated Liaison Person is un-contactable, the IFCA member needs to consult with the Designated Deputy Liaison Person or, failing that, any on-duty manager. If a child is in immediate danger and there is no Designated Person available in IFCA, the IFCA member needs to tell the child that they will contact the relevant duty social worker, or, if outside hours, the Gardai.
3. The volunteer who has the concern should record in writing what the child has said, including as far as possible, the exact words used by the child.
4. The Designated Person must then record the details of this report, on the Child and Family Agency Standard Reporting Form which must then be signed by the person making the report.

Please refer to IFCA's Child Protection Policy Document for further details.

Protections for Persons reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998;

This act makes provision for the protection from civil liability of persons who have communicated child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of the Child and Family Agency or to any member of An Garda Síochána. This protection applies to organisations as well as to individuals.

This means that even if a communicated suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the person who communicated the concern had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report. A person who makes a report in good faith and in the child's best interests may also be protected under common law by the defence of qualified privilege.



In the case where the Designated Liaison Person reaches the conclusion that reasonable grounds do not exist that she will not report the concern of the volunteer to the relevant Child and Family Agency or An Garda Síochána, the volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written statement of the reasons why the centre is not taking action. The volunteer should be advised that, if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to consult with, or report to, the Child and Family Agency or An Garda Síochána.

**Please contact the IFCA Office to receive full copies of all IFCA Policies and Procedures discussed in this document.**



Irish Foster Care Association

Irish Foster Care Association  
Unit 23,  
Village Green,  
Tallaght Village,  
Dublin 24

Tel: 01 459 9474  
Support Helpline: 01 458 5123

Email: [info@ifca.ie](mailto:info@ifca.ie)  
Website: [www.ifca.ie](http://www.ifca.ie)