

Aequalitas Child Protection Policy

Updated Version – August 2025

Introduction

This Child Protection Policy has been designed to ensure the safety and well-being of all children and adolescents aged 12 and above involved with Aequalitas. The policy complies with European Union regulations and Portuguese legislation, reflecting our commitment to creating a safe environment for young people. Aequalitas aims to achieve social equality by promoting social rights and addressing the specific interests of minorities and disadvantaged groups, including migrants, refugees, and persons with physical and mental disabilities.

As an organization that implements local and international projects with children and adolescents, we recognize that some of these groups face heightened vulnerabilities. Therefore, this policy also identifies specific risks that may affect children in this context, namely:

- exposure to discriminatory behaviors;
 - unsupervised contact with adults;
 - lack of child protection training among volunteers or staff;
 - misuse or unauthorized sharing of data and images.
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Purpose

The objectives of this policy are:

1. To protect children and adolescents from abuse and exploitation.
 2. To ensure that all staff members are aware of their responsibilities regarding child protection.
 3. To establish clear procedures for reporting and responding to child protection concerns.
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Legal Framework

This policy is based on the following:

- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Portuguese Law on the Protection of Children and Young People at Risk (Law no. 147/99)

Principles

1. **Best interests of the child:** The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.
2. **Non-discrimination:** All children have the right to protection from abuse, regardless of race, religion, gender, or socioeconomic status.
3. **Participation:** Children have the right to express their views and to have them considered in matters affecting them.
4. **Confidentiality:** All information related to child protection concerns must be handled with strict confidentiality.

Recruitment and Training

- **Recruitment:** All staff must undergo thorough background checks, including criminal record verification and reference checks.
- **Training:** Staff must complete mandatory annual training on child protection policies and procedures.

Code of Conduct

Aequalitas clearly defines acceptable and unacceptable behaviors when working with children:

- Staff must always act in the best interests of children.
- Staff must avoid situations where they are alone with a child.
- Physical contact must be appropriate and only when necessary.
- Staff must immediately report any concerns regarding a child's well-being.

Unacceptable behaviors include:

- sexual or inappropriate comments;
- use of offensive or humiliating language;
- private communication with children through unofficial channels;
- public sharing of images without legal guardian consent.

Reporting Procedures

1. **Recognition:** All staff must be vigilant in recognizing signs of abuse or neglect.
 2. **Reporting:** Any concern must be immediately reported to the designated Child Protection Officer (CPO).
 3. **Response:** The CPO will assess the concern and take appropriate action, including notifying local child protection authorities, if necessary.
 4. **Documentation:** All concerns and actions taken must be securely and confidentially documented.
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Child Protection Officer (CPO)

- Aequalitas appoints the following person as the Child Protection Officer:
Mónica Corrigan, legal representative of the association and youth worker.
 - The CPO will receive specialized training and have access to the necessary resources to fulfill her role.
 - Her contact details will be shared through internal channels to facilitate communication and reporting.
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Confidentiality and Data Protection

All records related to child protection matters will be securely stored and access will be limited to authorized personnel only. Personal data will be processed in accordance with the GDPR.

Partnership with Parents and Guardians

We will work in close cooperation with parents and guardians, ensuring they are informed about our child protection policy and any concerns relating to their children.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to ensure compliance with legal standards and best practices. Feedback from staff, children, and parents will be sought to improve the policy's effectiveness.

Communication

This policy will be made available to all staff, volunteers, children, and parents. Regular updates and information will be provided to ensure everyone is aware of their responsibilities.

Conclusion

Aequalitas is dedicated to ensuring the safety and well-being of all children and adolescents in our care. By adhering to this Child Protection Policy, we commit to providing a safe and nurturing environment for young people to thrive, in line with our mission to promote social equality and defend the rights and interests of minorities and disadvantaged groups.

This policy was approved by the Board of the Aequalitas Association.

Signature:

Mónica Corrigan

President and Legal Representative of Aequalitas

Lisbon, 4 August 2025

