



Operation Shanti Child Protection Policy

Introduction

Operation Shanti is committed to maintaining an environment that allows children to grow up and reach their full potential safely and without fear. Our Child Protection Policy covers children who are part of our programs.

The Policy covers:

- providing a safe environment for the children in our programs;
- appointing and supporting members who work with our children; and
- procedures to follow if a situation of concern arises involving children.

Principles

Operation Shanti places high value on providing children with a healthy, productive environment in which to grow and thrive. We aim ensure that our children feel safe and welcome. When adults are in contact with children, protecting the rights, needs, and dignity of these children is paramount.

The wellbeing of all girls and boys is the foundation of all of the activities of Operation Shanti. Our engagement with children is governed by the Operation Shanti Child Protection Policy.

It is the duty of anyone undertaking to care for a child to protect the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the child from all reasonably foreseeable risk.

Policy Guidelines

Operation Shanti endeavors that no communication that we control about the children in our programs portrays them as victims and Operation Shanti does not exaggerate or glamorize the poverty and challenges faced by a child.

All records about the children and their families under the care of Operation Shanti, along with information regarding their status, is maintained in strict confidentiality by Operation Shanti. The majority of children with whom Operation Shanti works live at Karunya Mane; however, Operation Shanti will be informed, and its approval will be required in writing, before volunteer/sponsor home address/contact details are offered to or shared with children or any direct contact with the children is made.

It is the responsibility of all directors, officers, staff, outside tutors/teachers brought in by Operation Shanti to work with the children and volunteers of Operation Shanti to do their best to prevent the physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of children and to report any abuse, alleged or suspected.

Operation Shanti Child Protection Policy (cont'd)

Operation Shanti will respond without delay to any complaints made that a child, for whom it or its directors, officers or staff are responsible, may have been harmed.

Operation Shanti reserves the right to conduct a background check on the suitability of any person in contact with the children in Operation Shanti's programs, and can also, as a minimum:

- discuss any previous experience working with children;
- request volunteers to confirm that they have never been convicted of, or cautioned for, a sexual offense or other offense against children.

Operation Shanti staff shall strictly adhere to these child protection standards to prevent children from being exposed to exploitation or abuse at any level at any time.

Sponsors, visitors and volunteers who want to visit children must agree to these policies. A sponsor, visitor or volunteer will be allowed to meet a child only in the presence of an Operation Shanti staff member, at the Operation Shanti designated location. Private locations such as hotels or private residences are not allowed as meeting places.

In addition to the process set forth above to assess the suitability of persons in contact with Operation Shanti's children, each sponsor, visitor or volunteer will be asked to provide verification of his or her identity and, if visiting as a member of a separate organization, proof of association with such organization. No unannounced visits to children by sponsors, volunteers, other supporters of Operation Shanti's work or members of separate organizations are allowed.

Each adult working with or interacting with children should:

- treat all children with respect and dignity;
- not engage in any of the following:
 - scapegoating, ridiculing or rejecting a child;
 - making any racially provocative comments to a young person, even in fun;
 - rough, physical or sexually provocative games;
 - making sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person, even in fun;
 - inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form;
 - sexual relationships with young people even if they consent;
 - inviting a young person to their home alone unless Operation Shanti, in the case of children staying in its care at Karunya Mane, or the parent(s) have given their permission in writing; and
- not engage in harassment as a form of discipline;
- if they see another adult acting in ways that might be misconstrued, be prepared to speak to an Operation Shanti staff member about their concerns.

Anyone (staff or sponsor or other persons) suspected of child abuse or inappropriate behavior will be dealt with severely, including action that may include legal action and severance of employment and/or relationship.