



Baltimoretax
Lifeline, Health &
Learning Foundation

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. Policy Purpose and Institutional Commitment

Baltimoretax Lifeline, Health and Learning Foundation ("BLHL Foundation") maintains a strong commitment to protecting children from harm, including abuse, exploitation, and neglect. The Foundation enforces a zero tolerance policy regarding such conduct.

All children participating in the Foundation's programs, partnerships, community engagements, research, or operations are entitled to safety and protection from violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect.

This Policy outlines the standards and procedures implemented by BLHL Foundation to prevent, identify, report, and respond to safeguarding risks affecting children.

For the purposes of this Policy, a child is defined as any person under 18 years of age, in accordance with Nigerian law and international child protection standards.

2. Scope of Application

This Policy is binding on the following groups:

- Trustees and Board members
- Management and staff
- Volunteers, consultants, and contractors
- Implementing partners and sub-grantees
- Visitors and third parties engaged in Foundation activities

Safeguarding obligations apply in all locations, including offices, communities, partner institutions, virtual environments, and public settings.

3. Forms of Child Abuse and Exploitation

Child abuse is defined as any act or omission that causes actual or potential harm to a child. This encompasses various forms, including but not limited to:

Physical Abuse : Any action that results in physical injury or harm to a child.

Sexual Abuse and Exploitation : This includes all sexual activity with children, grooming, sexual coercion, exchanging money or benefits for sexual acts, creating or sharing sexual images, or exposing children to sexual content. Consent is not a valid defence for individuals under 18 years.

Emotional or Psychological Abuse : Acts such as humiliation, intimidation, threats, degradation, or ongoing rejection that negatively impact a child's emotional health.

Neglect : Failing to provide adequate care, supervision, protection, medical care, or education for a child.

Economic or Criminal Exploitation : Involving children in trafficking, forced labour, child marriage, illegal activities, or other acts that benefit others at the cost of the child's safety and dignity.

4. Safeguarding Standards and Expected Conduct

All individuals associated with the BLHL Foundation are required to prioritise the safety, dignity, and well-being of children. The following conduct is strictly prohibited:

- Physical punishment or violence in any form
- Sexual relationships or sexualized communication with anyone under 18
- Inappropriate or intrusive physical contact
- Humiliating, degrading, or intimidating language or actions
- Being alone with a child in isolated or non-visible settings without safeguards
- Inviting children into private homes or personal spaces
- Favouritism that may lead to dependency or exploitation
- Unauthorised communication with children outside approved program channels
- Taking, storing, or sharing children's images without informed consent
- Sharing identifiable information about a child without authorisation

All interactions are required to be appropriate, transparent, and subject to external scrutiny.

5. Safe Programming Practices

Safeguarding measures are integrated into the design and implementation of all BLHL Foundation programs. Activities involving children must occur in open, visible environments with appropriate supervision ratios and safe transportation. Written consent from parents or guardians is required prior to photography, video recording, or publication of children's stories.

Images and stories must uphold the child's dignity, avoid stigmatisation, and, when necessary, protect the child's identity. Safeguarding risk assessments are conducted proportionally to the program's scope and context.

6. Recruitment, Vetting, and Training

All individuals working with or having access to children are subject to rigorous background screening, including reference checks and safeguarding-focused screening where feasible and lawful. Personnel are required to acknowledge this Policy and complete safeguarding training within one month of joining, with refresher courses as necessary. Partners must demonstrate equivalent safeguarding standards and contractually agree to comply with this Policy or adopt comparable safeguards.

7. Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

All safeguarding concerns, including suspected abuse, disclosures by a child, concerning behaviour by staff or partners, or breaches of the Policy, must be reported promptly.

Reports must be submitted within 24 hours to the designated Safeguarding Focal Point, Executive Director, or through approved reporting channels. If an allegation concerns senior management, the Board Chair must be notified. In situations of immediate danger, the child's safety takes precedence and relevant authorities must be contacted. Individuals who report concerns in good faith are protected from retaliation. Prompt reporting enables swift risk mitigation and minimises potential harm to vulnerable children. All staff are required to understand the reporting channels and their responsibility to escalate issues promptly, regardless of their role within the organisation.

8. Responding to Disclosures and Allegations

Staff are required to respond calmly and reassuringly when a child discloses abuse, listening without judgment and explaining that the information will be shared with those responsible for protection. Staff must not investigate, interrogate, or promise confidentiality. Creating a safe environment for the child, acknowledging their courage in speaking up, and addressing their emotional needs during the initial disclosure are essential. Disclosures must be documented accurately, using the child's own words where possible, and established reporting procedures must be followed.

Upon receipt of a report, immediate action is taken to assess risk and protect the child. Alleged perpetrators may be suspended from child-related duties pending investigation. Where required, authorities are notified, and internal investigations follow due process and applicable law. Outcomes may include disciplinary action, termination, referral to law enforcement, or other appropriate measures. Support services are provided for affected children, including referrals for medical, psychosocial, legal, or protection services. The safeguarding team works with external agencies to ensure effective intervention and ongoing support, aiming for the best outcome for the child. Regular communication with the child and their guardians is maintained throughout the process, keeping them informed of developments and next steps.

9. Roles and Accountability

All personnel are responsible for maintaining safe environments. Program teams implement safeguarding measures and ensure adequate supervision. The Safeguarding Focal Point oversees reporting, documentation, training, and case management. The Executive Director is accountable for operations and reports major incidents to the Board. The Board of Trustees provides ultimate oversight for safeguarding governance and compliance. Clear lines of accountability ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are integrated at every level of the organisation, with regular reviews and audits to assess effectiveness. Periodic training sessions and awareness campaigns reinforce roles and expectations, fostering a culture in which safety and protection are prioritised.

10. Monitoring, Compliance, and Review

Compliance with this Policy is monitored through supervision, audits, training records, and feedback mechanisms. Serious safeguarding incidents are reported to the Board promptly, and periodic summaries are included in governance reports. The Policy is reviewed annually or following significant incidents, regulatory changes, or emerging risks. Monitoring systems identify gaps and areas for improvement, ensuring the Policy remains relevant and effective. Stakeholder input is incorporated during reviews to provide practical insights and adapt to changing circumstances. Continuous improvement is prioritised, with procedures and protocols adjusted as necessary.

Institutional Commitment

BLHL Foundation affirms that safeguarding children is a fundamental governance obligation and an essential component of ethical, accountable development practice. Violations of this Policy result in disciplinary action, including termination and possible referral to law enforcement. The safety of every child encountered through the Foundation's work is paramount. The Foundation is committed to fostering a culture of vigilance and responsibility, regularly engaging staff and stakeholders in safeguarding initiatives. By prioritising children's welfare, BLHL Foundation demonstrates its unwavering dedication to upholding the highest standards of integrity and care in all its activities.