

Safeguarding, Confidentiality, and Crisis Response

The rules that protect children, families, volunteers, and the Movement

Village Series · Document 9 of 10

Required reading for Village Leaders and Chapter Coordinators. Sections 3 through 7 are required for every volunteer who works with families.

This document is policy, not guidance.

Nothing in it is adjustable by a village, a council, or a Village Leader. Where a local practice conflicts with this document, this document governs.

Before this policy is put into use:

It must be reviewed by an attorney licensed in the state where the chapter operates. Background check requirements, mandatory reporting obligations, records handling, and volunteer liability all vary by state, and several sections below are written to be completed with local legal advice rather than adopted as written.

1. Five principles

Everything in this document follows from these. When a situation arises that is not covered here, reason from them.

The child comes first	Ahead of the volunteer, ahead of the village, and ahead of the Movement's reputation. Every time, without exception.
Remove the opportunity	Most harm to children in volunteer organizations happens in unobserved one-to-one contact. The rules in Section 4 exist to make that situation not arise, which protects children and equally protects volunteers from suspicion.
Raising a concern is always right	Being wrong about a worry costs nothing. Staying quiet about a real one can cost a great deal. No volunteer has ever been penalized under this policy for raising something in good faith.
Confidentiality has one limit	Everything a family shares is private, except where a child may be unsafe. That limit is stated to families up front, not discovered by them later.
Stay inside the role	Volunteers are not clinicians, investigators, or emergency services. The most dangerous volunteer is a well-meaning one operating past their competence.

2. Who this applies to

Everyone who holds a role in a village or chapter, in proportion to their contact with families and children.

Role	Background check	Must read
Family Ambassador	Required	This whole document
Training Ambassador	Required	This whole document
Mother Mentor	Required	This whole document
Village Leader / Founder	Required	This whole document
Chapter Coordinator	Required	This whole document
Adults at events with children present	Required	Sections 4, 6, 7, 8
Parent and Youth Council members	Required	Sections 5, 6, 7, 8
Occasional volunteers with no child contact	Not required	Sections 5 and 8

3. Screening and approval

No volunteer is assigned to a family, or placed in a role with contact with children, until every step below is complete. There are no exceptions for people who are well known locally, urgently needed, or personally vouched for by the Village Leader. Those are precisely the circumstances under which organizations skip steps and later regret it.

☐	Application and identity confirmed Name, address, contact details, and a form of identification.
☐	Two references, contacted Actually called, not merely collected. Ask directly whether they would be comfortable with this person working with children.
☐	Background check completed and cleared Arranged and paid for by the Movement or the chapter. Scope determined with legal counsel for the state.
☐	Role orientation completed Document 2 for Leaders, Document 4 for Ambassadors, Document 6 for council members.
☐	This policy read and acknowledged In writing.
☐	Memorandum of Understanding signed Document 5.
☐	Recorded by the Village Leader Date of each step, kept in the volunteer file.

What disqualifies a person

Any conviction or finding involving offenses against children, sexual offenses, or violent offenses is an absolute bar. There is no discretion on this and no village-level appeal.

Other findings are reviewed case by case at chapter level, considering the nature of the matter, how long ago it occurred, and its relevance to the role. Some states restrict what an organization may consider and when it may be asked. The chapter's standard must be set with legal counsel, applied consistently, and written down before it is needed rather than improvised around a particular person.

Re-checks and lapses

- Background checks are repeated every three years.
- A volunteer must notify the Village Leader if their circumstances change in any way relevant to the check.
- A volunteer who steps away for more than twelve months is re-screened before returning.

4. The contact rules

These are the core of this policy. They are not negotiable and no village may relax them.

- 4.1 A volunteer does not meet one-on-one with a student. Contact is with the family. The only exceptions are a volunteer who already had a close relationship with that family before joining the Movement, or a meeting held in a supervised group setting where other adults are present and can see it.
- 4.2 If a volunteer is uncertain whether a situation qualifies as an exception, it does not. Ask the Village Leader before, not after.
- 4.3 Two adults must be present wherever the village brings children together — events, council meetings, group activities — in person or on video. If the second adult does not arrive, the activity is postponed. Not shortened, not held with the door open. Postponed.
- 4.4 No volunteer transports a student in connection with their role.
- 4.5 Village activities are held in public or supervised places. Not in a volunteer's home. A Family Ambassador visiting a family's own home does so only with a parent present throughout.
- 4.6 Contact with families is by phone, text, email, or a group visible to other adults. The Hub does not carry private member-to-member messaging, and this is deliberate.
- 4.7 No adult in the village has private one-to-one digital contact with a student — no direct messages, no private accounts, no personal social media connections. Communication with a young person runs through their parent or in a group an adult can see.
- 4.8 A volunteer does not accept money or gifts from a family, and does not offer or sell services to families they work with.

Why the rules are shaped this way.

They are not built on suspicion of volunteers. They are built on the observation that harm requires opportunity, and that unobserved one-to-one access is the opportunity. Remove it and you protect children from the rare person who would exploit it — and you protect every honest volunteer from ever having to prove what happened in a room where nobody else was present.

5. Confidentiality and information

The rule

Information about a family or a student is shared with nobody outside the Movement without that family's permission. Inside the Movement it goes only to the people whose role requires it, and only as much as the situation requires.

This obligation is permanent and continues after a volunteer leaves the role.

Who sees what

Role	Access
Family Ambassador	Full access to the records of their own assigned families only. No access to other Ambassadors' families.

Role	Access
Village Leader	Access as needed to support Ambassadors and handle escalations. Not routine browsing.
Chapter Coordinator	Aggregate numbers. Individual records only where an escalation requires it.
Councils	No access to any family record, result, or case note. No individual family is ever a council agenda item.
The Movement	Aggregate and anonymized data only, for reporting and improvement.
The family	Everything about themselves. They own their record.

Assessment results

Some questionnaires are hosted in the Movement’s own systems so families can reach them easily, which means a volunteer may be able to see that a family completed one and may see the result.

Access is not qualification. No volunteer scores, interprets, or explains what any result means about a child. For questionnaires a family completes privately — including the adverse childhood experiences questionnaire — the volunteer’s role is to make it available, explain why it matters, provide referral information, and then leave it alone unless the family raises it.

Handling and storage

- Family information is kept in the Movement’s systems, not in personal notebooks, personal email, or personal cloud accounts
- Devices used for village work are locked with a passcode
- Nothing about a family is discussed where it can be overheard, including with a volunteer’s own household
- Records transfer with the family when a volunteer leaves or a family changes Ambassadors
- A departing volunteer returns or deletes everything in their possession

If information is disclosed by mistake

Tell the Village Leader the same day. The Leader informs the family affected and the Chapter Coordinator. Do not attempt to contain it quietly. Almost every serious confidentiality failure in a volunteer organization began as a small one somebody decided not to report.

6. Children at events

☐	Two checked adults present at all times Wherever children are gathered.
☐	Children remain their own parent's responsibility Unless childcare is formally arranged, staffed by checked volunteers, and supervised.
☐	Written parental permission for Youth Council members under 18 Before their first meeting, renewed each school year.
☐	Meetings and activities in public or supervised places Never a private home.
☐	Know the practicalities before you start Where the exits are, who holds the first aid kit, who calls emergency services, and where parents are.
☐	Any concern goes to the Village Leader that day Not next week, and not after you have thought about it.

7. Photographs and publicity

- 7.1** Ask permission before photographing anyone. Every time, including at events where a general notice was posted.
- 7.2** Written parental permission is required to photograph a child, and to publish that photograph. Permission to take is not permission to publish.
- 7.3** Never publish a child's full name, school, or location alongside their image.
- 7.4** Never publish a score, a result, a diagnosis, or anything identifying a family's circumstances — with or without permission.
- 7.5** Permission can be withdrawn at any time, and material is removed when it is.
- 7.6** Volunteers do not post about families on their own personal accounts.

8. When a child may be unsafe

This is the section every volunteer must know before they need it.

What you might notice

You are not expected to identify abuse or to be certain of anything. You are expected to notice and to pass it on. Things that warrant a report to your Village Leader include unexplained injuries, a child who seems frightened of going home, a disclosure by a child or parent, a marked change in a child, or a household situation that appears to put a child at risk.

What to do

Do	Listen calmly if a child is telling you something, and let them speak in their own words Write down what was said, in their words, as soon as you can afterward, with the date and time Contact your Village Leader immediately Follow the reporting obligations that apply where you live Call emergency services if a child is in immediate danger
Do not	Do not question or interview the child, or ask leading questions Do not promise to keep it secret — you cannot, and saying so is a promise you will break Do not confront the parent or anyone else Do not investigate Do not wait to be certain

Mandatory reporting.

Reporting obligations differ by state. Some states require every adult to report a suspicion of child abuse or neglect, regardless of role; others limit the duty to defined professions. These obligations exist independently of this policy and are not satisfied by telling a Village Leader.

Each chapter must determine the rule in its state, record it in the box below, and cover it in every volunteer orientation.

To be completed by the Chapter Coordinator with legal advice:

In this state, mandatory reporters are:

Reports are made to:

Reporting phone number:

Emergency:

9. Crisis response

Three situations, and what a volunteer does in each. In all three the volunteer's job is the same: stay present, get the right people involved, and do not try to handle it alone.

Someone talks about harming themselves

- Stay with them. Do not leave the call or end the conversation abruptly.
- Take it seriously. Do not argue, minimize, or try to talk them out of how they feel.
- If there is immediate danger, call emergency services.

- Otherwise, direct them to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline — call or text 988 — and stay with them while they do.
- Contact your Village Leader immediately afterward. Do not carry this alone overnight.

You are not expected to counsel anyone, and you should not try. Your value here is that you are present and that you know who to call.

A family's circumstances become unsafe or unstable

Housing lost, no food, violence in the home, a medical emergency, a parent unable to cope.

- Pause the academic work entirely. It is not the priority and continuing it signals that you have not understood.
- Tell your Village Leader the same day.
- Help the family reach local services. Point, introduce, and follow up — you are not the service.
- Keep contact going. A family in crisis often disappears, and reappearing later is much easier if someone stayed in touch.

A child is in immediate danger

- Call emergency services first. Before the Village Leader, before anyone else.
- Then contact your Village Leader.
- Write down what you saw and when, as soon as you can.

The Village Leader's part

- Be reachable. A Leader who cannot be reached in a crisis is not doing the job.
- Take the weight off the volunteer — tell them explicitly that it is now yours.
- Notify the Chapter Coordinator the same day for anything involving a child's safety.
- Record what happened, what was done, and when.
- Check on the volunteer afterward. People who deal with a crisis often go quiet a week later.

10. An allegation against a volunteer

This will be rare and it must be handled correctly the first time, because organizations that handle it badly generally do so by improvising.

- 10.1** Any allegation goes immediately to the Village Leader and the Chapter Coordinator. It is never handled at village level alone.
- 10.2** The volunteer is suspended from all contact with families while the matter is looked at. This is not a finding of wrongdoing and is explained to them as such.
- 10.3** Where the allegation involves possible harm to a child, it is reported to the appropriate authorities. The Movement does not investigate such matters itself and does not decide whether they are credible.
- 10.4** The family and child are supported throughout, and are not pressured in either direction.
- 10.5** Everything is documented — what was alleged, when, by whom, what was done, and when.

10.6 Nobody discusses it beyond those who need to know. That includes after it is resolved.

The instinct to protect the Movement is the thing to resist.

Every organization that has failed children badly did so by prioritizing its own reputation at the moment a concern arose. The Movement's reputation is worth nothing if it is purchased that way, and it will not survive the discovery either.

11. Who is responsible for what

Role	Responsibility
Every volunteer	Know this policy. Follow the contact rules. Raise concerns immediately. Stay inside the role.
Village Leader	Ensure nobody is placed with a family before screening is complete. Be reachable. Escalate every safety concern the same day. Keep the volunteer records. Cover this policy at every orientation.
Chapter Coordinator	Arrange background checks. Set the disqualification standard with legal counsel. Determine and publish the state's reporting rule. Handle allegations. Review this policy annually.
The Movement	Maintain this policy, provide the training, and support chapters when something serious happens.

12. Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Chapter Coordinator with legal advice, and immediately after any serious incident. Every volunteer re-acknowledges it each year.

Adopted by chapter

Chapter Coordinator

Date adopted

Next review due

Reviewed by (attorney)

Version in force

One sentence to remember out of all of this:

If you are wondering whether something should be raised, raise it. That instinct is what this entire document exists to support.