Divine Hearts Foundation — Safeguarding Policy

Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Effective date: November 13, 2026 · **Review:** annually, or sooner if law or practice requires
Applies to: all Divine Hearts Foundation staff, Board members, volunteers, interns, consultants, contractors, and partner organisations delivering programmes with or for the foundation, in the United States and Uganda.

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1. Our commitment

Divine Hearts Foundation works with children, young people, and vulnerable adults across its programmes — child sponsorship, youth mentoring, health and wellness education, senior services, and women's programmes. Every person we serve has the right to be safe, respected, and free from abuse, exploitation, and harm. The foundation has **zero tolerance** for abuse or exploitation of any kind, by anyone acting in its name.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone who represents the foundation. This policy sets the standards we work to, the conduct we require, and what happens when a concern is raised. It is written to protect the people we serve, and to protect the integrity of the foundation's work.

2. Definitions

- **Child:** any person under 18 years of age.
- **Vulnerable adult:** an adult who, because of age, disability, illness, poverty, displacement, or other circumstance, may be less able to protect themselves from harm or exploitation.
- **Abuse:** physical, sexual, or emotional abuse; neglect; and exploitation, including sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), financial exploitation, and trafficking.
- **Safeguarding concern:** any observation, disclosure, allegation, or worry that a child or vulnerable adult may be at risk of harm, or that a person representing the foundation has breached this policy.

3. Safe people

- Staff, volunteers, and others in roles involving children or vulnerable adults are **background-checked before they begin** and reference-checked at recruitment.
- No person barred from working with children or vulnerable adults, or with a relevant conviction or disciplinary record, may serve in such a role.
- Every person covered by this policy receives safeguarding induction before working directly with programme participants, and refresher training at least annually.
- Roles and supervision are structured so that no adult works alone and unobserved with a child wherever the programme setting allows.

4. Code of conduct

Everyone representing the foundation must:

- Treat every child and vulnerable adult with dignity and respect, regardless of background, identity, or belief.
- Never engage in any form of sexual activity or sexualised behaviour with a child, or with a programme participant of any age where a power relationship exists — including in exchange for assistance, sponsorship, goods, or services. **Assistance is never conditional on any personal favour.**
- Never hit, humiliate, or use degrading punishment on a child.
- Follow the **two-adult rule**: avoid being alone with a child in a private or unobservable space; keep doors open and activities visible.
- Communicate with children and participants only through approved programme channels; never through personal social media accounts.
- Obtain informed consent from a parent or guardian (and the agreement of the child, appropriate to age) before photographing or filming a child, and use images only for agreed purposes. Children's images are published with dignity — never in a way that identifies a child in sensitive circumstances or exposes them to risk.
- Report every safeguarding concern, however small it seems, under Section 6.

5. Safe programmes

- Programme activities involving children or vulnerable adults are risk-assessed before launch and reviewed when activities change.
- Sessions for girls and young women are led or co-led by female staff or educators wherever the programme design allows.
- Health and education programmes use age-appropriate curricula; clinical services are delivered only by qualified partner health facilities to which participants are referred.
- Partner organisations delivering activities with or for the foundation are expected to meet standards consistent with this policy; safeguarding expectations are written into partnership agreements.

6. Reporting a concern

Report immediately — the same day — to the Designated Safeguarding Lead:

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead:** Executive Director, Divine Hearts Foundation — bmusasizi@divineheartsfoundation.org · +1 301 732 0339
- **Deputy (US programmes):** Chief Operating Officer — nmushabe@divineheartsfoundation.org
- **Uganda programmes:** Uganda Country Director (Kampala office)
- **If the concern involves the Executive Director,** report directly to the **Chairman of the Board of Directors.**
- Anyone may also write to **care@divineheartsfoundation.org** marked "Safeguarding — Confidential."

No one will be penalised for raising a concern in good faith, even if it proves unfounded. Retaliation against a person who reports is itself a disciplinary matter.

7. Responding to a concern

- The safety of the child or vulnerable adult comes first, before any other consideration.

- The Safeguarding Lead records the concern factually and confidentially within 24 hours, decides immediate protective steps, and — where a crime may have been committed or a person is at ongoing risk — refers the matter to the appropriate authorities (police or child-protection services in the country concerned).
- A person who is the subject of an allegation may be suspended from participant-facing duties while the matter is examined.
- Every case is reviewed to conclusion by the Safeguarding Lead, reported to the Board of Directors in summary form, and used to strengthen practice.
- Records are held confidentially, on a need-to-know basis, in line with the law of the country where the programme operates.

8. Accountability

Breaches of this policy are treated as serious misconduct and may result in dismissal, removal from a volunteer or Board role, termination of a contract or partnership, and referral to authorities. The Board of Directors reviews this policy and a summary of safeguarding activity annually. This policy is published on the foundation's website so that participants, families, partners, and funders can hold the foundation to it.

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