



# **CHILDREN'S HOME OPERATIONS MANUAL**

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# I.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The principal objective of Arms of Love is to provide family-based, long-term residential care for children who have been permanently separated from their natural families due to a combination of death, abandonment, or serious abuse.

Our foremost desire is to glorify God by demonstrating His compassion, mercy, and justice toward, and on behalf of, the children who are entrusted to our care.

We believe that:

- Ministry to children at risk is most effective when it identifies and addresses each child's unique physical, psychological, educational, emotional, and spiritual needs. Therefore:
  - We seek to meet each child's nutritional and other physical needs to ensure his proper physiological growth and development.
  - We employ professional psychologists and social workers to develop and implement individualized care plans for each child.
  - We enroll the children in local private schools and employ teachers to individually tutor the children so they receive the best possible education.
  - We maintain a very high staff-to-child ratio so that each child receives the love and attention that they previously lacked, which is necessary for their emotional healing and further emotional development.
  - We provide a Christian environment for the children and encourage their spiritual development in a way that provides them with hope for the future, a desire to fulfill their potential in life, and a heart for ministering to the needs of others.
- Each child is entitled to certain basic human rights, which include the right to life; the right to protection against all forms of violence, abuse, and exploitation; and the right to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Therefore:
  - We provide the children with a place of refuge - a place where the children feel safe, loved, and accepted, even by those who know their background.
  - We serve as advocates for the children, always seeking to advance their best interests when interacting with the government and the community.
  - We help the children heal from the acts which have been committed against them and accept responsibility for the acts they have committed against others.

- We seek to provide the highest standard of care to meet the children's physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social needs.
- Each child should have the opportunity to fully develop his gifts and fulfill the calling God has placed on his life. Therefore:
  - We help the children value themselves according to God's love for them rather than valuing themselves according to how other people have treated them.
  - We help the children discover their God-given gifts and talents, and inspire them to use those gifts to serve others and to serve Christ.
  - We help each child recognize and realize the calling God has placed on his life by providing the education, vocational training, and other training that child needs to fulfill his calling and become a self-sufficient member of his community.
- Our desire is to develop each project as a ministry of the local church to its own community and maximize the long-term impact of the project. Therefore:
  - We train, equip, and empower the local church and other nationals to develop, oversee, and grow the ministry.
  - We provide the children with a family environment in which to grow and mature, where they are cared for by substitute parents of their own culture and background.
  - We seek to reintegrate the children into their own community rather than placing the children for adoption internationally.
- Our desire is to encourage local church-based mission in the United States, the United Kingdom, and other Western nations. Therefore:
  - Arms of Love is supported by a network of churches who have partnered together in support of our ministry.
  - We encourage churches to become involved in the Arms of Love ministry, not only through financial support, but by sending short-term teams and other volunteer personnel.
  - We seek to increase the vision, passion, and commitment of Christians to caring for the poor, at home and abroad, as a natural and necessary response to having received and experienced God's compassion, mercy, and justice in their own lives.

## **II.**

### **SELECTING AND RECEIVING CHILDREN INTO THE CHILDREN'S HOME**

#### **A. Criteria for Selecting Children**

Each Children's Home sponsored by Arms of Love International will only accept children who satisfy the following criteria at the time of admission:

- Children who are orphaned, abandoned, or seriously abused
- Children who have no foreseeable prospect of being reintegrated with their families
- Children who have no other place to live on a long-term basis

Additional parameters and criteria may be established by each individual project. Among children who satisfy the criteria of a given project, priority should be given to those children who are in the greatest immediate need of assistance.

#### **B. Intake Process**

Before a child is received into the Children's Home, the staff must conduct an appropriate investigation into the child's background and current living situation to determine whether the child complies with the acceptance criteria. The staff must then work with the government to process the necessary paperwork to obtain legal custody of the child. The following records should be obtained or created for each child before that child is received into the home or as soon thereafter as practicable:

- Birth certificate
- All government records concerning the child, including appropriate certification that the Children's Home has been granted legal custody of the child
- A medical evaluation to determine, *inter alia*, diseases and other medical conditions, drug addictions, and evidence of physical or sexual abuse
- A psychological evaluation
- School records, where applicable
- A report reflecting the staff's investigation into the child's background, including the whereabouts of the child's biological parents, a history of the child's living circumstances, and a description of the child's most recent living situation

Acceptance of children into the Children's Home is subject to the approval of the Director of the Children's Home and the Project Liaison or other appointed representative of Arms of Love International.

The records in each child's file must be made available to the Project Liaison and to the Board of Directors for Arms of Love International upon request.

### **C. Receiving Children into the Children's Home**

Each child received into the Children's Home must want to live at the home, abide by its rules, and fully participate in its program. Each child must understand why he has been placed in the Children's Home and have a sense of purpose for being there.

After a child is received into the home, an individual plan should be drawn up for the care and development of that child. The plan should have as its fundamental purpose advancing the best interests of the child and helping that child recognize and realize his fullest potential in life.

- The plan should be prepared in consultation with the child, depending on the child's age and maturity.
- The plan should describe the current physical, educational, medical, and emotional needs of the child and set forth reasonable short-term and long-term goals in each of these areas to be attained over specified periods of time.
- The plan should pay special attention to correcting the child's deficiencies and developing the child's strengths.
- The plan should be reviewed and revised on a regular basis.

### **D. Adjustment Phase**

After a child is first received into the Children's Home, the child will go through an adjustment phase. This phase will be shorter and less pronounced in those projects where the child has already completed a successful stay in a transition home. During this phase, program should focus on:

- Physical recuperation and medical attention
- Counseling and ministry
- Recreation
- Adapting to life in the home
- Interpersonal relations
- Initial evaluation and development of the individual childcare plan

### **III. STANDARD OF CARE**

#### **A. Introduction**

This section sets forth the standard of care that must be maintained by each children's home sponsored by Arms of Love International. The practices and activities of each home must comply with these guidelines or comparable guidelines that have been mutually agreed upon by Arms of Love International and the Director of the Children's Home. Each project is encouraged to develop more specific criteria as a means of implementing these guidelines.

All members of the staff must have access to and be familiar with the contents of these guidelines and any further criteria that might be adopted for their implementation. The children residing in each home should also be aware of these guidelines (where age appropriate) and should understand that these guidelines were prepared specifically for their benefit.

#### **B. Physical Care of the Children**

##### **1. Meals and Clothing**

###### **a. Objectives**

- That the children be provided with an adequate amount of food and clothing to meet their physical needs
- That the children be provided with a quality and diversity of food and clothing that approximates a middle-class standard of living in their community
- That the children learn how to shop for food, prepare meals, and select appropriate clothing for themselves as they grow older
- That the children learn to properly care for their personal belongings

###### **b. Responsibilities of Director and Staff**

- Purchase high quality foods and produce
- Prepare three meals daily, and snacks as appropriate, which provide the children with proper nutrition and a varied diet
- Train the children how to shop for food and prepare healthy and nutritious meals, to the extent it is age appropriate to do so
- Present meals in a manner which is orderly, well mannered, and socially pleasant
- Respect any medically-necessary dietary needs of the children
- Ensure that the children are provided an adequate amount of clothing and shoes

- Train the children how to select socially, culturally, and morally appropriate manners of dress
- Help the children learn how to properly care for their personal belongings

## 2. Health and Safety

### a. Objectives

- That the children receive the medical and dental care required to maintain good health and promote proper growth and development
- That the children learn the importance of good health and hygiene
- That the children understand the adverse risks of smoking, alcohol, substance abuse and sexually-transmitted diseases
- That the children be taught appropriate norms of conduct which will help ensure their physical health and safety
- That the children know how and what to do in the event of a fire, accident, or other emergency

### b. Responsibilities of Director and Staff

#### i. Medical Care

- Know the medical history and needs of each child, including any history of abuse, dietary needs, allergies, and other medical conditions
- Maintain medical records for each child that contain a history of the child's medical information for as many years as possible and a record of medical care and treatments received, both before and during the child's stay in the home
- Obtain regular medical and dental assessments for each child, including vaccinations, and ensure that each child receives appropriate medical and dental care whenever needed
- Obtain optical and psychiatric assessments and treatment for each child on an as-needed basis
- Receive adequate training to know how to respond in the event of a medical emergency
- Develop a relationship with a local doctor and health care facility
- Provide ongoing physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy to children who need it

ii. Hygiene and health education

- Teach the children proper hygiene and disease prevention, and set a good example for the children
- Address issues of health and hygiene with appropriate sensitivity
- Maintain appropriate hygiene and cleanliness within the home
- Implement programs that address issues of smoking, alcoholism, substance abuse, sexually-transmitted diseases, and sexual promiscuity
- Take appropriate measures to ensure that no smoking, consumption of alcohol, substance use, or sexual activities occur on or off the premises

iii. Safety

- Teach the children a proper regard for their safety in all their activities
- Provide the children with clearly understood instructions and directions to be followed in the event of a fire or other emergency and conduct periodic safety drills
- Ensure that fire extinguishers and smoke detection devices are kept in good working order and are suitably placed throughout the home
- Ensure that all medications are stored in a locked and secure cabinet that the children have no access to (without the supervision of the staff)

3. Lodging

a. Objectives

- That the children feel positive about their living environment
- That the children feel comfortable and are content with the furnishings and decorations of the home, which should approximate a middle-class standard of living in their community
- That the home be sufficiently functional to meet the children's physical and educational needs
- That the children feel safe and secure living in the home
- That the children do not need to wait too long to use a toilet, bath, shower, or wash basin

b. Responsibilities of Director and Staff

- Maintain a clean and sanitary environment for the children
- Ensure that the home is adequately lit, heated, and ventilated
- Rent or build the home in a good community that will help the children feel safe and secure and raise their feelings about themselves and their aspirations in life
- Keep the home in good repair
- Furnish and decorate the home so as to create a pleasant and comfortable

- atmosphere for the children and the staff
- Provide adequate space and furnishings for the children to eat, sleep,
- conduct private or group activities, and do their school work
- Provide security measures adequate to protect the children from harm
- and their belongings from theft
- Provide the children with clean, functional, and adequate restroom
- facilities

## **C. Emotional Care of the Children and Relationships with Staff**

### 1. Objectives

- That the children feel loved, valued, understood, and cared for by every member of the staff
- That the children feel confident that their health, growth, development, and well-being are the highest priority of the staff
- That the children relate to their houseparents the same way that they would relate to a natural mother and father
- That the children learn to respect authority
- That the children feel comfortable approaching the staff with any questions, concerns or problems which they might have

### 2. Responsibilities of Director and Staff

- Houseparents should love and care for the children in their home in the same way that they love and care for their own children.
- Spend significant amounts of time interacting with the children in meaningful ways, physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually
- Give the needs of the children highest priority
- Encourage the children to share any questions, problems, or questions they might have, and then be receptive, open, caring, and supportive when listening to the children's concerns or problems
- Develop and comply with guidelines governing the use of appropriate language and inappropriate forms of touching and holding
- Nurture healthy relationships with the children, recognizing that strong relationships provide the primary basis for influencing the children's lives
- Model healthy relationships for the children, between members of the staff and with members of the community
- Help resolve any inter-personal conflicts within the home
- Maintain discipline within the home and clear lines of authority
- Ensure that the children develop and maintain appropriate respect for the staff and other adults and persons in authority

## **D. Education and Vocational Training**

### 1. Objectives

- That the children receive the highest level of education that they are capable of achieving
- That the children perform academically to their highest potential
- That the children value their education and appreciate its importance
- That children with physical or learning disabilities receive any special attention that is required for them to receive the same education and be given the same opportunities as other children, to the extent it is feasible to do so
- That the children learn a strong work ethic
- That the children be given equal opportunities for a higher academic education and vocation training consistent with their interests and abilities

### 2. Responsibilities of Director and Staff

- Enroll the children in an appropriate school and ensure their attendance, with priority being given on enrolling the children in a private Christian school with high academic standards whenever feasible
- Assist the children with their school work and hire obtain additional assistance whenever needed
- Provide the children with the appropriate books, supplies and facilities which they need to accomplish their educational objectives
- Ensure that the children are learning and performing according to their abilities, academic level, and appropriate expectations
- Help the children accelerate academically, if needed, so the children can participate in a grade level appropriate to their age
- Ensure that the children receive training in skills that will increase their job opportunities in the local community, such as computer training or English skills, whether in their school or through supplementary programs
- Secure additional, specialized assistance as needed for children who have physical or learning disabilities
- Create a home environment and routine which places a high priority on education and which encourages and enables the children to complete their school work
- Help the children understand the importance of a good education
- Establish a routine in the home which includes appropriate chores as one means of helping the children learn a good work ethic
- Counsel and assist the children in choosing vocations and programs of study consistent with their interests, abilities, and the local economy, with the objective that the children be able to support themselves financially as adults
- Provide the children with adequate and equal opportunities to pursue vocational training and/or a higher education, as necessary to meet their individual vocational and educational goals

- Assist the children, whenever feasible, in pursuing further education and vocational training even after they reach legal age

## **E. Spiritual Care of the Children**

### 1. Objectives

- That the children know they will be loved and cared for irrespective of their personal religious faith or the lack thereof
- That the children find meaning and purpose in their lives
- That the children understand basic Christian teaching and values, including the Christian message of salvation through faith in Christ
- That the children recognize and experience God's love for them, place their faith in Christ, and develop a personal relationship with God
- That the children deepen their relationship with God as they grow and mature
- That the children's lives reflect Christian values and norms of behavior
- That the children develop a heart and a commitment to helping others, develop their personal gifts, and become equipped for ministry

### 2. Responsibilities of Director and Staff

- Recognize and develop the spiritual capacity of each child
- Present Christian teaching and values in a simple manner appropriate to the age of each child
- Answer the spiritual questions of each child in a sensitive and non-condescending manner
- Attend church with the children on a regular basis and involve the children in the regular activities of the church
- Pray regularly and spontaneously with each child for his or her needs
- Conduct regular times of devotion with the children within the home, which include worship, teaching, prayer, and ministry for one another
- Encourage the children to develop personal routines of prayer, Bible study, and participation in a local Christian fellowship
- Participate in regular staff devotions, worshipping together, praying for one another, and ministering to one another
- Conduct personal devotions on a regular basis
- Set a Christ-like example for the children in daily life
- Teach the children Christian values and morals using the Bible, stories, and situations that arise in everyday life
- Plan and conduct outreaches in which the children participate in meeting the physical and spiritual needs of other children in the local community

## **F. Discipline**

### 1. Objectives

- That the children respect and submit to authority
- That the children demonstrate appropriate respect for other children
- That the children behave in accordance with established standards of conduct within the home and understand the disciplinary consequences of failing to behave in accordance with those standards
- That the children exercise appropriate self-control

### 2. Responsibilities of Director and Staff

- Regularly discuss with the children standards of appropriate conduct and disciplinary measures.
- Enforce disciplinary measures as needed to uphold the standards of conduct that have been established for the children.
- Adopt and implement written policies that set forth standards of appropriate conduct in the home and permitted disciplinary measures. Such policies should comply with the following guidelines:
  - The goal of the disciplinary procedures must be the improvement of the children's behavior, not just punishment for their misconduct.
  - The children should be rewarded for consistent acceptable behavior.
  - The staff must be positive and proactive in correcting behavior problems of the children.
  - Disciplinary actions should be reasonable, relevant, and proportional to the behavior involved.
  - Disciplinary actions must comply with local laws and cultural norms.
- Serious disciplinary offenses should be reported to the Director and recorded in the child's individual file. The following information should be recorded: details of the inappropriate behavior, the disciplinary action taken, the names of the staff involved, the date of the incident, the signature of the person making the report, and the signature of the Director.
- Disciplinary guidelines should be reviewed on a regular basis for effectiveness and revised accordingly.

## **G. Issues of Race, Culture, and Language**

### 1. Objectives

- That each child's racial, cultural, and linguistic heritage be respected and preserved
- That the children learn to value their particular background and heritage
- That each child feel accepted as they are – by the staff and by other children – and do not feel discriminated against based upon their racial, cultural, or linguistic background

### 2. Responsibilities of Director and Staff

- Be aware of, learn about, and respect the racial, cultural, and linguistic background of each child
- Help the children preserve their cultural expressions in the way they eat, dress, and express themselves (*e.g.*, through music and art)
- Prepare meals that reflect the culinary richness of the local community
- Recognize and encourage local customs and celebrations which are part of the children's culture and heritage
- Prohibit any cultural activities or practices that would be harmful to the children physically, emotionally, or spiritually
- Address and remedy, quickly and effectively, any discrimination or racism on the part of the staff

## **H. Activities and Leisure**

### 1. Objectives

- That the children's leisure time be filled with purposeful and meaningful activities, so that such time is used constructively and the children do not become bored
- That the children have appropriate amounts of time in which to rest, relax, and play
- That the children develop any special talents or interests that they might have (*e.g.*, musical, artistic, athletic, etc.)
- That the children have adequate opportunities to participate in sports
- That the children develop and maintain appropriate levels of physical fitness and coordination
- That the children learn to play and interact appropriately with other children

## 2. Responsibilities of Director and Staff

- Organize and schedule purposeful and meaningful activities to fill the children's leisure time and encourage the children's participation in those activities
- Provide adequate recreational equipment and facilities for the use of the children
- Establish and follow a routine within the home that provides the children with an appropriate balance of structure, chores, and leisure time
- Discover the particular talents or interests of each child and take steps to encourage and develop those talents and interests (*e.g.*, musical, artistic, athletic, etc.)
- Organize and conduct regular field trips, for recreational and educational purposes, which are appropriate for the ages of the children
- Encourage reading for pleasure according to each child's interest and ability
- Provide opportunities for the children to participate in individual or team sports and other group activities in accordance with their interests
- Organize and conduct activities which involve other children in the community, so the children do not become isolated but remain integrated with their community
- Ensure that the children participate in sufficient physical activity so that they develop physically and maintain an appropriate level of physical fitness
- If television is available, restrict the viewing of television so that it does not become a principal leisure activity and carefully monitor the programs or videos watched

### **I. Transitioning to Adulthood**

#### 1. Objectives

By the time each child reaches legal age, he must be prepared to:

- move out of the Children's Home
- begin life as an adult in the community
- begin supporting himself, either through a vocation or by pursuing further vocational training or education at a college or university

However, each project should consider ways in which to continue assisting children after they reach legal age, to help them complete their education or vocational training and make the transition to adulthood.

#### 2. Responsibilities of Director and Staff

As children progress toward legal age, specific plans must be made for helping each individual child complete his current program of education or vocational training and making the transition to adulthood. Even after a child reaches legal age, each project should consider ways to provide its young adults with further opportunities for

attending a local college or university and/or continuing their vocational training, so as to ensure that the children make a successful transition to adulthood.

As they grow and mature, the staff must actively work with the children to develop their life skills and prepare them for adulthood. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Teaching the children to build and maintain healthy, godly relationships
- Helping the children understand their sexuality within a Biblical framework
- Helping the children discern God's plan and direction for their lives
- Preparing the children for life in the community, *e.g.*, by helping the children develop a productive work ethic
- Teaching the children practical, daily life knowledge and skills
- Teaching the children how to manage finances
- Helping the children secure appropriate employment after they complete their education
- Helping the children save any earnings they accumulate while living at the Children's Home so they have a savings when they move out.
- Maintaining contact with the children, and continuing to counsel them, after they leave the Children's Home

## IV. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND CHILD PROTECTION

### A. Basic Rights of the Children

Each child has the right to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

Each child has the right to protection against all forms of violence, abuse, and exploitation. Adequate preventative and remedial measures must be taken to protect the children from any harm, whether from staff, volunteers, relatives, or visitors.

Each child must feel safe and secure living in the home.

Each child has the right to express his or her ideas, opinions, and feelings, so long as such expressions are consistent with the standards of conduct established by the home.

The operation of the home and the conduct of the staff, in all matters, shall be guided by what is in the best interest of the children.

Each child should be given a genuine say in important decisions that affect his or her life. Staff members must discuss with the children significant matters that affect them, listen to the children, and take the time to determine their views and opinions.

Each child should be encouraged to select a vocation and set other life goals in accordance with his or her abilities, interests, and aspirations. At an appropriate age, children must be equipped to make such decisions for themselves, and those decisions must be respected and supported by the staff.

Special accommodations should be made for children who are mentally or physically handicapped, so they receive the same opportunities as other children to the greatest extent possible.

### B. Privacy Issues

Children have a right to privacy and to personal space, concerning their person and their personal belongings. This includes privacy with respect to matters involving the opposite sex, bathing or showering arrangements, the use of toilets, and personal matters such as menstruation. If it is necessary to encroach on a child's privacy, the child's permission should be obtained before such encroachment, unless their health or safety is at issue. Only significant issues bearing upon a child's health or safety, or compliance with the rules of the home, should override a child's right of privacy

Children can write or receive letters without the censorship of the staff. If a staff member has a good faith basis for believing that correspondence is harming a child, or has the

potential to harm a child, physically, emotionally or spiritually, the Director should be consulted and appropriate measures taken to address the issue in consultation with the child. The staff must help the child understand their concerns, the basis for their concerns, and how any actions taken address their concerns and are in the best interests of the child.

The children's case files should be securely held and maintained in such a way as to protect their confidentiality.

### **C. Visitation by Relatives and Other Visitors**

Visitors are not allowed to come and go as they please. *All* visits must be approved in advance by the Director of the Children's Home. Visitors must arrive and depart with the knowledge of the staff and subject to their monitoring and supervision.

A log should be kept that indicates the names of visitors entering the home, the time they arrived, the time they left, the purpose of their visit, and who approved the visit.

A child's natural parents, relatives, and others with whom they developed significant relationships prior to entering the home should be given appropriate opportunities to visit the child. However, access and visitation should *only* be permitted to the extent it does not disturb or interfere with the normal operation of the home, the program implemented for the child, and the guidelines and criteria governing the operation of the home.

The best interests of each child must ultimately govern the manner and frequency of all access and visitation. The Director has the discretion to limit or refuse visitation (to the extent permitted by local law), based upon the best interests of the child and the operation of the home.

Access or visitation should *not* be permitted if there is a good faith basis for believing that there is – or has recently been – an abusive relationship with the relative (or other visitor) or that the child may be harmed in any way.

### **D. Child Protection**

#### **1. Staff and Volunteers**

All staff and volunteers must be thoroughly screened prior to working with the children, including careful checks of resumes, backgrounds, and references. Individuals with a history of physically or sexually abusing children should not be given access to the children.

No staff member who has repeatedly engaged in abusive conduct will remain employed by the home. Very serious offenses will result in immediate termination after a single violation and without a warning.

Any allegations of abuse or mistreatment must be immediately and thoroughly investigated. The staff member accused of misconduct must be relieved of his duties or closely supervised, depending upon the nature of the allegations, until a conclusion and resolution is reached.

Any incident of abuse or misconduct should be reported in the child's case file and reported to the government to the extent required by local law.

## 2. Complaint Procedure

Children must know how to address any complaints about living in the home and to whom such complaints should be directed. Likewise, the staff must know how to address any complaints about the care of the children, the treatment of the staff, or any other matter, and to whom such complaints should be directed.

Any complaint about any aspect of living in the home should be addressed seriously and without delay. The staff should not minimize such complaints or feel threatened by them.

The children must feel comfortable and safe in reporting any complaints without fear of retribution from the staff or other children and free from intimidation. Within the realm of their experience, children must feel that their complaints are dealt with seriously and properly.

All complaints and concerns of the children and the staff should be addressed to the Director of the Children's Home. The Director must investigate any credible complaint and ensure that all complaints are dealt with seriously, properly, and fully.

The Director must deal with serious complaints against the staff in such a way as to protect the children while also safeguarding the interests of the staff until the situation is appropriately investigated and any disciplinary proceedings are carried out.

Complaints involving the Director should be addressed to the Project Liaison, and if the complaint remains unaddressed or unresolved, it should be reported to a member of the Board of Directors of Arms of Love International.

Procedures for the discipline or termination of staff are addressed in the next section.

## V. PERSONNEL

### A. Positions, Responsibilities, and Qualifications

#### 1. Positions and Responsibilities

*Project Liaison:* The Project Liaison acts as a representative of Arms of Love International and serves as an interface between the Arms of Love Board of Directors and the Director of the Children's Home. The Project Liaison will typically be a volunteer who is not employed by the project and who lives off-site. The responsibilities of the Project Liaison include:

- Maintain regular communications with the Director of the Children's Home
- Visit the home on a regular basis (at least once a year)
- Assess the financial, staffing, and other needs of the project, and bring those needs to the attention of Arms of Love
- Work with the Director to develop the budget for the project and approve any revisions or modifications to the budget
- Assess whether the home is operating in a manner that is consistent with the guidelines set forth in this manual
- Assist the Director of the Children's Home, as needed, with significant problems that arise with the operation of the project
- Work with the Director in approving the hiring and termination of staff
- Work with the Director or project social worker in determining whether children satisfy the criteria for admission
- Receive a copy of the financial and operational reports specified in this manual
- Participate in regular meetings of the International Leadership Team, by teleconference or otherwise, or other similar subcommittee, as required by the Arms of Love Board of Directors, and serve as a resource for answering any questions that might arise concerning the status or development of the project.

*Director of Children's Home:* The Director of the Children's Home should be part of the full-time staff of the project and should live in the same community. The Director is the final decision-making authority concerning the day-to-day operation of the project. The Director is the person ultimately responsible for the implementation of the guidelines and requirements of this manual, overseeing the operation of the Children's Home and its related programs, supervising all other staff of the Children's Home, ensuring the proper care of the children, and interfacing with the Project Liaison and other representatives of Arms of Love concerning the status and development of the project.

*Houseparents:* The houseparents are responsible for all aspects of caring for the children within their home, as a Christian couple would care for their own natural children, in a manner sufficient to meet the objectives set forth in this manual and consistent with its guidelines.

Additional full-time and part-time staff should be retained on an as-needed basis to implement the guidelines and requirements set forth in this manual. It is anticipated that each project will be staffed differently based upon the needs of the children, the number of children served by the project, local requirements, and the availability of personnel. Such additional staff will typically include assistants for cleaning and preparation of meals; drivers; security guards; and professionals such as teachers, psychologists and social workers.

## 2. Qualifications

In addition to the general criteria set forth below, the following additional qualifications exist for the identified positions:

The Director of the Children's Home should be a national, have a college education, have management experience, and have a significant amount of education and/or experience relevant to working with children at risk.

Houseparents must be nationals, married, and have no more than two children of their own. Houseparents should also have child-rearing experience and at least a high school diploma. In hiring houseparents, priority should be given to houseparents who have older children or grown children.

## **B. Selecting and Hiring Staff**

Generally, staff should be selected based upon the following criteria:

- Strong Christian faith
- Strong recommendations by their pastor, former employer, and others
- Active participation in the local church
- Love of children and a passion for ministering to children
- Commitment to the vision of the project
- Aptitude for working with children and understanding their needs
- Strong character and sound judgment
- Personal background and qualifications
- Willingness to learn and receive training
- Willingness to recognize personal weaknesses and desire to improve
- Ability to withstand personal stress

The project must secure proof of the qualifications of each candidate and address any discrepancies in their resumes, application forms, or reference checks *prior to* offering a candidate a position.

Staff should be retained for a probationary period where legally permitted.

### **C. Training, Support and Adequacy of Staff**

Our objective is to provide for the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs of the children, not just their physical needs. We believe that the most important factor in accomplishing this objective is the adequacy and quality of the staff. Accordingly, we are committed to:

- Hiring an adequate number of staff to properly care for and supervise the children.
- Hiring individuals that have the skills, experience, training, and personal character that is necessary to care for the children and fulfill the responsibilities of their position.
- Providing the staff with the support and the tools they need to properly care for the children and fulfill their responsibilities.
- Providing all individuals working in the home with a basic level of training in working with children at risk.
- Providing the staff with additional training and instruction in any skill areas that require development.
- Supporting and encouraging the staff through any personal challenges that arise during the course of their employment.
- Attending to the needs of the staff by, *e.g.*, giving the staff adequate time off, providing adequate vacation time, and providing opportunities for the staff to participate in devotions, retreats, and other events together.

### **D. Discipline and Termination of Staff**

If a member of the staff fails to fulfill his or her responsibilities or is not working toward the objectives stated herein, the Director should make a record of such deficiencies and discuss those deficiencies with the person concerned. The Director should conduct any investigation necessary to ascertain the facts of a given situation or assess an individual's performance, while being sensitive to protecting the privacy interests of the person concerned.

A continuing failure to fulfill responsibilities or meet the objectives stated herein may result in dismissal. Serious cases involving the health and safety of the children or intentional misconduct demonstrating a fundamental failing of character, such as the physical abuse of a child or the misappropriation of funds, may result in immediate dismissal without a prior warning.

The dismissal of any member of the staff is within the discretion of the Director of the Children's Home but must be approved by the Project Liaison. In the case of disagreement, the decision of the Project Liaison will ultimately control. However, the Project Liaison should give weight and deference to the judgment of the Director of the Children's Home in all employment-related decisions. If the situation is not resolved satisfactorily, the Director may elect to further address the issue to a member of the Arms of Love Board of Directors.

## VI. EVALUATING AND MONITORING THE CHILDREN AND THE CHILDREN'S HOME

### A. Individual Childcare Plan and Reviews

Within four weeks of a child being placed in the Children's Home, the project's psychologist or social worker should work with the rest of the staff to develop an individual childcare plan for that child. The plan should assess the physical, educational, medical, and emotional needs of the child and set forth reasonable goals in each area to be met over specified periods of time.

A review should be conducted with each child once every six months following that child's initial admission to the Children's Home. At least one review each year should include a second person, *e.g.*, the Director of the Children's Home. These reviews should focus on evaluating whether the goals of the individual childcare plan are being met and whether the childcare plan should be revised, *e.g.*, by setting new or modified goals for the future. If certain goals are not being met, new steps should be taken in an effort to meet those goals.

The child should participate in the preparation and modification of his individual childcare plan to the extent appropriate based on his age and maturity. Each review should include the child's comments about his stay in the home.

A written report must be made following each review that summarizes the outcome of the review, states the date of the review, and identifies the persons present during the review.

A copy of each individual childcare plan and the written report generated after each review must be kept in the child's case file. The childcare plan and the reports from the reviews, as with all other papers in the child's case file, must be made available to the Project Liaison and to the Board of Directors for Arms of Love International upon request.

### B. Project Evaluations

Once a year, the Director of the Children's Home is responsible for generating a report that includes the following:

- An evaluation of the current operation of the Children's Home, focusing on whether the objectives stated in this manual are being met.
- An evaluation of whether the specific objectives set forth in the prior report were met during the past year.
- Objectives for the coming year, together with a plan of action for meeting those objectives, with a focus on improving the operation of the Children's Home in any areas where the objectives of this manual are not being met.

Each annual evaluation shall be provided to the Project Liaison and to the Board of Directors of Arms of Love International upon request.

#### 1. Evaluating the Current Operation of the Children's Home

The current operation of the Children's Home should be assessed against the guidelines and objectives set forth in this Manual of Operations, including but not limited to an assessment of the following:

- Standard of care for the children
- Progress of the children during the preceding year
- Adequacy of the current facilities and programs
- Adequacy and performance of the staff
- Adequacy of the current operating budget

#### 2. Recommendations and Objectives

In his project evaluation, the Director should provide his recommendations for improving the operation, staffing, and funding of the Children's Home, including but not limited to recommendations concerning the following:

- Improving the standard of care for the children
- Meeting any special or unique needs of individual children
- Improving the existing facilities and programs
- Providing additional training or education for the staff, creating new positions, or replacing staff
- Line items in the budget that should be added or revised.

Using these recommendations, the Director should set objectives to be met over the coming year, in consultation with the Project Liaison. The Director and the Project Liaison should work together to ensure that the objectives for the coming year are met, with the Project Liaison helping to secure any additional resources required to meet those objectives.

### **C. Personal Visits and Inspection of Premises**

The Project Liaison, and any other individual designated by the Board of Directors of Arms of Love International, shall be permitted access to the premises of the Children's Home, the children residing at the home, the staff of the project, and any and all records relating to the children, the employment and performance of the staff, and the finances of the project. Such access must be permitted at all times. Reasonable notice of a visit or inspection will always be given where practicable, but is not required.

The Project Liaison should visit the project as frequently as possible, but no less than once a year. During these visits, the Project Director should observe the operation of the Children's Home, speak with the staff and the Director of the Children's Home, and

speak with the children living in the Children's Home. The Project Liaison will report his observations to the International Leadership Team or other appropriate subcommittee of the Board of Directors of Arms of Love International.

The staff and the Director of the Children's Home will work with the Project Liaison and any other visiting representative of Arms of Love International to answer any questions that he or she may have and to resolve any problems or concerns which are identified as a result of the visit.

The children, the staff, and the Director of the Children's Home should be encouraged and should feel free, at all times, to express their opinions, concerns, and suggestions to the Project Liaison and any other representative of Arms of Love, without intimidation or fear of retribution. The children, the staff, and the Director should feel that their opinions, concerns, and suggestions are taken seriously and acted upon where appropriate.

## **VII. RECORD KEEPING**

### **A. Administrative System**

It is the responsibility of the Director to implement an administrative system that is effective in organizing and keeping current all written records for the Children's Home, including but not limited to the following:

1. Individual case files on each of the children (including individual childcare plans and six-month reviews)
2. Employment files for each paid employee of the project
3. Project evaluations (generated once every year)
4. Financial records (including monthly income and expense reports)

### **B. Individual Case Files**

The Director must keep a current case history for each child. These files should be kept in an organized manner, in a safe and secure place, and should include:

- Family history and background
- Legal documents
- Childcare plans (first developed at time of admission)
- Reviews (every six months) and modifications to the childcare plans
- Health records
- Educational records
- Certificates (birth & otherwise)
- Photographs
- Any other documents relating to the child

These case files must be made available to the Project Liaison and to the Board of Directors for Arms of Love International upon request.

### **C. Financial Records and Accountability**

The Director is responsible for obtaining (from Arms of Love or from other sources) the funding and other resources that are needed to properly operate the Children's Home in accordance with the requirements set forth herein. The Director is also responsible for ensuring that all resources and finances are spent wisely, efficiently, and for their intended purpose.

The Director, or someone acting under his supervision and approved by the Project Liaison, must keep detailed records showing all amounts received for the operation of the Children's Home (from Arms of Love *and* from other sources) and how all such funds were spent. Receipts must be maintained for all expenditures. Such records and receipts

must be made available for inspection upon request by the Project Liaison or the Board of Directors for Arms of Love International.

The Director, or someone acting under her supervision and approved by the Project Liaison, must provide the Project Liaison and anyone other person designated by the Board of Directors for Arms of Love International with monthly and annual reports summarizing all amounts received and all amounts spent during the preceding month or year, respectively. The reports should be provided in the format requested.

Property and facilities purchased or constructed using significant funds provided by Arms of Love International must continue to be used for their intended purpose. For example, if Arms of Love International provides funds for the purchase or construction of a children's home, that facility must continue to be used as a children's home. Legal measures, such as a written contract, must be implemented to ensure that such property and facilities may not be sold, transferred, or used for a different purpose without the prior written consent of Arms of Love International. The Director and the other staff and leadership of the Children's Home will cooperate in obtaining, creating, executing, and/or filing any legal agreements or other documentation that may be required to fully implement this provision.