

LANDMARK RELIEF INTERNATIONAL

Foundational Governance Policy

Safeguarding Policy

Aligned with Canadian law (federal and Ontario)
and United Nations and international humanitarian standards
Effective date: October 7, 2026

About this policy

This document sets out the Safeguarding Policy of Landmark Relief International (the "Organization"). It is one of three foundational governance policies, together with the Complaints and Feedback Policy and the Partner Due Diligence Policy. Each policy is self contained and is adopted, versioned, and reviewed separately by the Board of Directors. Together they form the core of the Organization's accountability and risk management framework and are designed to satisfy the expectations of institutional donors and to align with the legal requirements of Canada, where the Organization is incorporated (at the federal level and in Ontario), as well as recognized United Nations and international humanitarian standards.

The legal instruments and standards this policy relies on are named at the end of the policy and listed in the References appendix, with enough citation detail for independent verification.

Safeguarding Policy

Policy owner	Safeguarding Lead / Designated Safeguarding Focal Point
Approved by	Board of Directors, Landmark Relief International
Version	1.1
Effective date	October 7, 2026
Review cycle	Every two years, or sooner following a serious incident or legal change
Applies to	All directors, employees, volunteers, interns, contractors, consultants, and implementing partners

1. Purpose

Landmark Relief International is committed to the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of everyone who comes into contact with its work, particularly children and adults at risk. This policy sets out the Organization's zero tolerance of any form of abuse, exploitation, harassment, or harm by its personnel or partners, and the standards, prevention measures, and response procedures that give effect to that commitment. Safeguarding is treated as a core condition of quality programming and a duty owed to affected communities, not an administrative formality.

2. Scope

This policy applies to everyone acting for or on behalf of the Organization, whether paid or unpaid, and to all activities, in all locations, including online conduct and the use of images and personal data. It covers harm caused directly by personnel and partners, and harm the Organization is responsible for preventing, reporting, and addressing. Where a partner delivers activities on the Organization's behalf, the partner is expected to maintain equivalent safeguarding standards, verified through the Organization's Partner Due Diligence Policy.

3. Definitions

- **Safeguarding:** the responsibility to prevent and respond to harm, abuse, exploitation, neglect, and harassment affecting the people the Organization serves and its own personnel.
- **Child:** any person under the age of 18, regardless of local ages of majority or consent.
- **Adult at risk:** any adult who, because of disability, illness, displacement, or circumstance, is or may be unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation.
- **Abuse:** physical, emotional, sexual, financial, or other harm, including neglect and the failure to protect.
- **Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA):** as defined in the United Nations Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2003/13: sexual exploitation is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; sexual abuse is the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.
- **PSEA:** Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of the people the Organization serves by its personnel or associated personnel.
- **Sexual harassment:** unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature between personnel, or directed at personnel, in the workplace or in connection with work.

4. Policy statement and guiding principles

The Organization applies the following principles to every safeguarding decision:

- **Do no harm:** the Organization designs and delivers assistance so as not to expose people to further harm.
- **Best interests of the child:** in any matter affecting a child, the child's best interests are the primary consideration.
- **Survivor-centered:** survivors' rights, wishes, safety, and dignity guide the response; survivors are offered or referred to support.
- **Zero tolerance and non-retaliation:** abuse and exploitation are never acceptable; no one who reports a concern in good faith will be penalized.
- **Confidentiality and proportionality:** information is shared only on a need-to-know basis, consistent with safety and legal duties.

5. Standards of conduct

All personnel and partners must sign and abide by the Organization's Code of Conduct. Reflecting the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2019) and ST/SGB/2003/13, the following are prohibited and constitute serious misconduct that may lead to dismissal and referral to authorities:

1. Sexual exploitation or abuse of any member of an affected community by personnel constitutes serious misconduct and is grounds for termination of employment or engagement.
2. Sexual activity with any child (a person under 18) is prohibited, regardless of the local age of majority or consent. A mistaken belief about a child's age is not a defense.
3. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behavior, is prohibited. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to people the Organization serves.
4. Sexual relationships between personnel and people benefiting from the Organization's assistance are prohibited, as they are based on inherently unequal power and undermine the integrity of humanitarian work.
5. Where any person acting for the Organization suspects sexual exploitation or abuse by a colleague, whether in the Organization or another agency, they must report it through established reporting channels.
6. Managers and personnel at all levels must create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and supports this Code.

6. Prevention

- **Safer recruitment:** identity, reference, and qualification checks for all roles; criminal record and vulnerable sector screening for roles with access to children or adults at risk, to the extent permitted by local law (for example, vulnerable sector checks in Canada); self-declaration of any history of misconduct; and inter-agency reference checks where available.
- **Training and induction:** mandatory safeguarding and PSEA induction for all personnel, refreshed periodically, with role-specific training for managers and focal points.
- **Risk assessment:** safeguarding risk assessments for programs, activities, events, and partnerships, with mitigation measures recorded and monitored.
- **Safe programming and communications:** informed consent for the collection and use of images and stories; child-safe imagery; and design choices that reduce exposure to harm.

7. Reporting and mandatory legal duties

Report any concern or allegation promptly through the Organization's reporting channels and, where the law requires, to the relevant public authority. Reporting is a duty, not a choice, and applies even where the concern involves a colleague or a person in authority.

Legal duty to report (Canada, Ontario)

Under section 125 of Ontario's Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, every person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may need protection must promptly report the suspicion, and the information on which it is based, directly to a Children's Aid Society. The duty to report is mandatory for children under 16 and discretionary for those aged 16 or 17, is ongoing, cannot be delegated to a supervisor, and protects a person who reports in good faith from liability.

Internal reporting and survivor support

All allegations are also reported internally to the Designated Safeguarding Lead through the channels set out in the Organization's Complaints and Feedback Policy. Survivors are treated with dignity, kept informed as appropriate, and offered or referred to medical, psychosocial, legal, and protection support. Confidentiality is maintained, subject to legal reporting duties and the safety of those at risk.

8. Investigation and case management

The Organization does not conduct criminal investigations; it cooperates fully with the police, statutory child protection authorities, and donors, and refers matters to them as required. Internal fact finding, where appropriate, is fair, prompt, confidential, and conducted by trained persons with no conflict of interest, following the principle of presumption of innocence for the respondent alongside the safety of those at risk. Document outcomes, disciplinary actions, and lessons learned.

9. Roles and responsibilities

- **Board of Directors:** owns this policy, sets the tone from the top, receives safeguarding reports, and ensures adequate resources.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead / Focal Point:** maintains the policy, receives and triages reports, coordinates response and referrals, and reports to the Board.
- **Managers:** embed safeguarding in their teams and activities, complete risk assessments, and act on concerns.
- **All personnel and volunteers:** comply with the Code, complete training, and report concerns.
- **Partners:** maintain equivalent standards and reporting arrangements, verified through the Partner Due Diligence Policy.

10. Data protection and confidentiality

Personal and sensitive information relating to safeguarding is collected, stored, and shared only as necessary and lawful, consistent with Canada's Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) and other applicable privacy requirements. Records of allegations are kept secure and access restricted to those with a legitimate need.

11. Monitoring, evaluation, and learning

- **Records:** a confidential safeguarding register logs concerns, actions, timelines, and outcomes.
- **Indicators:** training completion rates, time to acknowledge and resolve, referral compliance, and community awareness of reporting channels.

- **Reporting and learning:** anonymized safeguarding data is reported to the Board at least annually, and findings feed back into prevention, training, and risk assessment.

12. Legal and standards basis

This policy is grounded in: the United Nations Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13, 9 October 2003); the IASC Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2019, superseding the 2002 original); the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (2024 Edition), Commitment 8 on respectful, competent, and well managed staff and Commitment 4 on avoiding harm; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); Ontario's Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, section 125; and PIPEDA (Canada). Full citations are in the References appendix.

13. Review

This policy is reviewed at least every two years, and sooner after any serious incident, audit finding, or change in the applicable law or standards.

References: legal and standards basis

The instruments below are the basis for this policy. They are current as of September 2026 and are checked against the official source at each review of this policy.

United Nations and international humanitarian standards

- United Nations Secretary-General's Bulletin, Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, ST/SGB/2003/13 (9 October 2003).
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (updated September 2019, superseding the 2002 original).
- Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability, 2024 Edition (CHS Alliance, Sphere, and Groupe URD; launched 21 March 2024), in particular Commitment 4 and Commitment 8.
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

Canada (federal and Ontario)

- Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, c. 14, Sched. 1, section 125 (Ontario duty to report).
- Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA), S.C. 2000, c. 5.