



Casa Buna Association

Child Protection Policy

Date: 28 October 2024

Latest review date: 1 February 2025

1. About Casa Buna Association

Casa Buna (“The Good House”) Association works with vulnerable children in Romania primarily in the area of education, with the aim of keeping kids in school for longer and improving their educational performance. Casa Buna works with more than 500 vulnerable children and their families in:

- Ferentari ghetto in Bucharest
- Jilava
- Leresti (Arges country)
- Nucsoara (Arges country)
- Sanpetru (Brasov county)

The families we work with are characterised by low income and difficult living conditions. In some cases, the parents are abroad, in prison, or addicted to drugs. Many of our families are ethnic Roma and often subject to racism and discrimination in access to health care, education, employment and housing.

Our support consists primarily of educational support which is delivered both via face-to-face settings and online. In face-to-face settings, we offer volunteer-supported tutoring and workshops at our location in Jilava and in our rural locations, kindergarten at our location in Jilava and in our rural locations, and educational camps. In online settings we offer volunteer-supported individual and group tutoring.

In addition to educational support, we assist with basic prerequisites for effective education: health (sports, dental and ophthalmology, paediatric checkups), food and hygiene products, clothing, basic furniture and appliances. Casa Buna also has vocational programmes to help older children build skills to obtain work.

2. Purpose and scope of the Child Protection Policy

This Child Protection Policy aims to ensure that all children receiving educational or other support from Casa Buna Association are protected from harm, abuse, and exploitation. It also aims to ensure that any concerns about children's safety within our activities and programmes are reported to the appropriate authorities. It outlines the responsibilities of staff, volunteers, and partners in safeguarding the well-being of children involved in our programs. The policy applies to all staff, volunteers, interns, contractors, and any other associate coming in direct contact with children on behalf of Casa Buna Association.

3. Basic principles

A safe and secure environment is a basic prerequisite for any educational programme. Casa Buna Association believes that it is our responsibility to take all possible steps to protect children from abuse and to ensure the safety of the children enrolled in our programmes. We promote an environment that is safe, supportive, and respectful for all children.

- All children have equal rights to protection from harm, regardless of their age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation.
- The welfare of the child is the primary consideration when dealing with any identified or suspected case of child abuse.
- Child protection is everyone's responsibility, and all staff, volunteers and other associates must act in the child's best interest. Staff and volunteers must be aware of the need for child protection and capable of reporting any case of potential harm to children. Child protection must be integrated into all aspects of our organisational strategy, structures, and work practices.
- We undertake to empower and educate children on their rights, personal safety, and steps they can take if there is a problem.

4. Definitions

- **Child:** Any person under the age of 18.
- **Child protection:** standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm.
- **Child abuse:** Any form of physical, emotional, or sexual harm, neglect, or commercial or other exploitation, that affects a child's safety, development, or dignity.
- **Neglect:** Failure to provide for a child's basic needs, including physical, educational, or emotional care, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's physical or cognitive development.
- **Commercial exploitation:** exploiting a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labour.

5. Code of conduct

All staff and volunteers must adhere to the following guidelines to ensure children's safety and protection:

Do's:

- Treat all children with respect and dignity.
- Obtain parental or guardian consent before involving a child in any activity.
- Use language and behaviour appropriate for children.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries, avoiding any actions that could be considered exploitative or harmful.
- Report any suspicions of child abuse or violations of this policy to the designated Child Protection Officer (CPO).

Don'ts:

- Do not engage in physical, verbal, or sexual abuse or exploitative behavior.
- Do not use inappropriate language or make suggestive comments.
- Do not do things for children of a personal nature that they can do themselves, including dressing, bathing and grooming.
- Do not take photos or film children unless required for Casa Buna's activities.
- Do not spend time alone with a child away from others in a manner which could be interpreted as inappropriate.
- Do not maintain a private relationship with a child (including engagement on social media) outside of the framework of educational support.

6. Recruitment

Staff: Casa Buna makes every effort to choose employees with appropriate skills and competencies, who are suitable for work with children.

- Each prospective employee must submit a CV and references, and undergo an interview with at least two staff members.
- All prospective employees must be informed about Casa Buna's Child Protection Policy.
- All new staff members who will have direct contact with children must provide a current police record check before a contract can be signed.
- Current staff members who have direct contact with children must provide a police record check by 1 March 2025.

Volunteers: Casa Buna works with a large number of volunteers, and at this moment it is unrealistic to request a police record check from each of them. However, certain screening measures must be taken:

- All volunteers must fill out an application form on the Casa Buna Association website before joining activities.

- All volunteers working with children must participate in a training session and/or interview with a Casa Buna Association staff member before taking part in activities with children.
- Volunteers who work with children in a face-to-face setting do so under the supervision of staff members.

7. Training

All new staff members and volunteers must be trained on child protection issues and Casa Buna's child protection procedures, and they must commit to respect the policy and procedures. They must be aware of how to report any potential situation of harm or abuse.

Existing staff members and volunteers must review the child protection policy and procedures on an annual basis.

8. Appropriate public communications

To ensure the safety and privacy of children and families, Casa Buna has established guidelines for public communications, including social media posts, reports to donors, and any public-facing materials. These guidelines fall into three categories:

- **Privacy:** Do not use a child's full name, personal information, address, or identifiable details in social media posts, reports, or public communications. First names or initials may be used if necessary. Stories or case studies shared in public communications should be anonymized to protect the identities of the children and families. When discussing program impact, prioritise using aggregated or anonymized data rather than individual details.
- **Consent:** Do not share images or videos of children, or stories or case studies about them, without prior written consent from parents or guardians.
- **Dignity:** Do not use manipulated or sensationalised text or images which may impact the dignity of the person involved.

9. Data protection

Casa Buna Association will maintain the confidentiality of information about children and families, while ensuring that necessary information is shared appropriately to protect children. This includes:

- Obtaining written consent to collect, store and process personal data.

- Ensuring compliance with data protection laws, including GDPR, when handling children's personal information.
- Limiting access to children's personal information to authorized personnel only and using the data solely for intended and communicated purposes.
- Securely storing personal data and disposing of it when requested.
- Sharing health information only with the consent of the family, and only when it is for the benefit of the child involved.

10. Response to incidents and reporting procedures

Notification of neglect or abuse is required when a person has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is being neglected or abused. Concerns must be reported whether they are internal (in relation to a staff member, volunteer or other associate of Casa Buna) or external (in relation to a child's home or school environment).

- If a staff member or volunteer suspects a child is at risk, they must report it immediately to the designated Child Protection Officer.
- Allegations of child abuse will be taken seriously and acted upon immediately. The CPO will assess the situation and, if necessary, contact child protection authorities or law enforcement.
- For all reported cases, Casa Buna requires that the child's best interest be the first priority.
- Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible, with information shared only on a need-to-know basis, to ensure the safety of any children concerned and of the person reporting the situation.
- Disciplinary action, up to termination of involvement, may be taken against anyone found violating Casa Buna's child protection policy.

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed at least once every two years, or more often if necessary, and updated to reflect best practices and legal requirements. Feedback will be sought from appropriate contributors (i.e. legal experts, children, parents, staff, volunteers) to improve the policy.

12. Contact Information

Child Protection Officer:

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Local Child Protection Authorities: DGASPC Sector 4