

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Children and Alternative Care

Immediate Response Measures



The development of this Technical Note was coordinated by Better Care Network, The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and UNICEF

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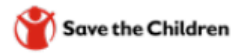
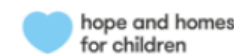


COVID-19 Children and Alternative Care

Aim of the Technical Note

Support child protection practitioners and governments in their immediate response to the child protection concerns faced by **children who are at risk of separation or in alternative care** during COVID-19 pandemic

- Developed by Inter-agency Task Force of practitioners specialized in child protection and care
- Builds on The Alliance's Technical Note on Protection of Children during the Coronavirus Pandemic



Impact of the Pandemic on Children's Care

- **Direct impact of COVID-19 and associated containment measures on children, their families and the broader environment**
- **Emergency response disrupts services and systems that support children's care and protection**
- **Increased risk of separation and need for alternative care (illness or death of caregiver, separation due to containment measures)**
- **Socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 crisis on families' capacity to care**

- **Children already in alternative care face particular challenges**
 - Kinship and foster care
 - Residential care
 - Youths transitioning from care and independent living arrangements
- **Children outside of family care or in care challenging settings: street situations, refugee and migrant children**

Keeping Children Safe in Family Care

- Provide **knowledge** and disseminate disability inclusive **messages** to families, caregivers, and children (Self care, mental health and psychosocial support, positive discipline)
- Prioritize **support and resources** for at risk primary caregivers (Inc. older adults, those with disabilities or chronic illness)
- Eliminate barriers to **accessing benefits**
- Support and follow up to those **at risk of separation before the pandemic** (via phone, virtual contact)
- Work with community leaders, including faith leaders, to **combat stigma and rumours**



Protection of Children in Alternative Care

Emergency plans covering alternative care services:

- ✓ **Clear policy statement on prevention of separation and family-based care alternatives**
- ✓ **Classify alternative care as essential services**
- ✓ **Establish SOPs to address interim care needs of separated or unaccompanied children**



- ✓ **Prioritize orderly family reintegration of children who can be cared for by their families**
- ✓ **Identify key essential personnel/staff including case workers**

Residential Care

- **Prohibit irregular admission** of children into residential care
- **Place moratoriums** on new residential care facilities
- **Ensure facilities are not closed rapidly** without effective care plans in place
- **Secure supply chains** of essential goods and critical services

Family-based care

- **Provide material support** to families offering kinship care and foster care
- **Outreach to foster families** to determine if they would be willing to care for another child
- **Identify high risk placements** and put in place **support and contingency plans**
- **Address additional support needs** of **children with disabilities** to enable care

Children in street situations

- Ensure that drop-in centers and similar such facilities are **designated and equipped** as essential services
- Direct local police to ensure children in street situations are **not arrested** for not self-isolating and provided with access to shelter or housing



Care leavers and those living independently

- **Outreach to care leavers**, particularly those who live alone
- Prioritize **emergency support** to care leavers who have not secured accommodation/ livelihood
- Enable access to **mental health and psychosocial support**
- **Increase funding** to advocacy services and mutual aid group

Next Steps

- Translations in Arabic, French, Spanish, Romanian, Russian, Bulgarian, Farsi, Portuguese, Indonesian, Thai, Swahili...
- Policy Brief for Governments
- More detailed resources in discussion by Task Force to address medium and long-term contexts
- **Resource Centre on COVID-19 and Children's Care:**
<https://bettercarenetwork.org/library/particular-threats-to-childrens-care-and-protection/resource-center-on-covid-19-and-childrens-care>

- Documentation of emerging practices and data tracking

Want to contribute or provide feedback?

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