**COURAGE POSTER SCRIPT**

**CHILD PROTECTION & SAFEGUARDING PROCESS**

INTRODUCTION

Your child protection and safeguarding process will be set out by your country’s Children’s Act and should detail the different steps you should take if you have seen or have knowledge of a child or children who are being abused, neglected or exploited. Whilst following the process, try to identify the different stakeholders on the Courage Community map so that you can connect the formal process to real people and places in your community.

1 a. CHILD ABANDONMENT & NEGLECT

If a child has been abandoned or neglected, which includes not being fed, given access to healthcare, schooling or adequate personal identity documentation.

1 b. CHILD ABUSE

Abused, which includes physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse, bullying, corporal punishment or subjected to harmful cultural practices.

1 c. CHILD EXPLOITATION

Or exploited, which includes child trafficking, prostitution, pornography, child marriage or child labour.

2. REPORT CHILD PROTECTION ISSUE TO A CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER

The first step is to report this problem to a child protection officer, who could be a social worker, the police, a doctor or nurse, a teacher, a sports coach, a counsellor, or a community or religious leader.

3 a. INVESTIGATION

The first step is to report this problem to a child protection officer, who could be a social worker, the police, a doctor or nurse, a teacher, a sports coach, a counsellor, or a community or religious leader.

3. b. ENSURE CHILD’S SAFETY – TEMPORARY SAFE CARE IF REQUIRED

The safety of the child must be ensured. If there is any risk to the child, they must be removed from their home, place of residence, or risky environment, and placed in temporary care such as a baby or children’s home, in foster care or a registered place of safety. This removal will require formal legal intervention.

4. NON-STATUTORY VS STATUTORY INTERVENTION, COUNSELLING & PREPARATION

The social worker will then need to assess if the issue reported can be dealt with through counselling and family support, or if statutory intervention is required through the Children’s Court, in which case, the parents, child and relevant perpetrators must be prepared. If the abuse, neglect or exploitation took place in a formal school, cultural or sporting environment or event, it must be reported to the relevant oversight or professional body for investigation as well.

5 a. NON-STATUTORY INTERVENTION, COUNSELLING & SUPPORT

If the formal decision is that counselling and support is sufficient to solve the problem, this can be undertaken by a social worker or family support organisation, who can also assist parents in getting the correct documentation for their child, and financial or social support if needed.

5 b. COURT REPORT & APPEARANCE

If a statutory intervention is required, the child, parents or relevant perpetrator will be taken to court and a legal finding will be made.

REUNIFICATION

In this legal finding, the court may rule that the child be reunified with their parents, with appropriate support, or they could decide to remove the child form their parents’ or guardian’s care.

6 a. CHILD REMOVED FROM PARENTS/CARER & 6 b. CRIMINAL ABUSE IDENTITIED – LINK TO JUSTICE SYSTEM

If there was no criminal intent, the child will be removed from the parent's care, however, if the parents or other relevant perpetrator INTENTIONALLY abused, neglected or exploited the child, they will be referred to the criminal justice system for prosecution.

7. ALTERNATIVE CARE PLAN

If a child is removed from their parent’s care, an alternative care plan will be needed. These can include placing the child with other family members in a kinship care arrangement, placing the child into foster care, institutional care or placing the child up for adoption.

7 a. KINSHIP CARE

Kinship care refers to placing a child into the care of another family member, such as the child’s grandparents or a close relative.

The courts and child protection officers must ensure that these family members are fit to care for the child in question.

This can be done through a formal foster care placement or adoption, or through an informal arrangement between family members.

It is important to note that Kinship care can have a negative impact on older family members as they are expected to take care of young children, well into old age, which can lead to high levels of stress and anxiety.

Financial considerations also need to be taken into account and whether the family member is in a financial position to take on another dependent.

This option does ensure that the child is still connected to their biological family which can support the cultural needs of the child.

7 b. FOSTER CARE

Foster care is a temporary child protection solution to give parents or guardians an opportunity to remediate the challenges that led to their child’s removal in the first place.

Foster care is legal, when conducted in accordance with the Children’s Act, and is a good temporary solution for keeping a child safe and secure.

The child can remain in contact with their parents if they desire this, usually under supervision.

Foster parents are entitled to a foster care grant which they can apply for at their local Department of Social Development.

As it is a temporary solution, however, there are some concerns that need to be raised.

Foster care can never replace a family environment where a child has a sense of permanence and feels like they belong.

The child may struggle with the issue of having an inconsistent carer, they may not be able to bond with a primary care giver and as a result they could feel insecure and struggle with their sense of identity as they grow up.

7 c. RESIDENTIAL CARE

Institutional or residential care is when a child is placed in a children’s home, or a group foster care home after going through the necessary process in court.

As with foster care, this option is a temporary child protection solution to give parents or guardians an opportunity to remediate the challenges that led to their child’s removal in the first place.

The child can remain in contact with their parents if they desire this, usually under supervision.

The home will take full responsibility for the care and education of the child whilst he or she is in their care.

As it is a temporary solution, however, there are some concerns that need to be raised.

As with Foster Care, a children’s home can never replace a family environment where a child has a sense of permanence and feels like they belong.

The child may struggle with the issue of having an inconsistent carer as children’s homes rely on shift workers.

They may not be able to bond with a primary care giver and as a result they could feel insecure and once again struggle with their sense of identity as they grow up.

7 d. ADOPTION

Adoption is believed to be the best long-term solution for a child outside of being cared for by their own family.

It is a legal process that is conducted in accordance with the Children’s Act.

The child would get a new family that has been carefully selected to meet their needs in a stable, permanent and loving home.

Some adoptees struggle with their identity formation due to living with an adopted family, rather than their biological family.

The child may choose to meet their biological parents when they become an adult, but this is at their discretion.

ENDS.