PROTECTION OF CHILDREN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
Children and Alternative Care

Immediate Response Measures

COVID-19
Children and Alternative Care
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:

• Documentation of emerging practices and data tracking

Want to contribute or provide feedback?

**UNICEF**: Aniruddha Kulkarni
ankulkarni@unicef.org

**Better Care Network**: Florence Martin
Florence.martin@bettercarenetwork.org

**The Alliance**: Hani Mansourian
hani.mansourian@alliancecpha.org