General Guidelines for the selection of chaperons to accompany children participating in Meetings/Consultations Organized or Supported by SAIEVAC

Introduction

Children’s participation is integral in SAIEVAC’s structure. SAIEVAC and its national and regional mechanisms work together to promote children’s participation in SAIEVAC’s meetings/consultations that may be hosted by any member state. The child delegates from across the region participating in those regional events may not be able to speak and/or understand the language being used at such venues including having adjustment problem with the overall environment in a new place compared to their home country or usual place of residence. Therefore, having minimum standards in place and ensuring care and protection of the child delegates is the key concern for SAIEVAC. The child delegates need to be accompanied by a responsible adult throughout their journey to ensure their protection and well-being. The child delegates under the age of 18 need someone to whom they can communicate, feel comfortable and are familiar with. The chaperons accompany the child delegates, ensure their protection, and provide them necessary support so that the child delegates have positive experience in participating in SAIEVAC’s meetings/consultations.

The safety, protection, well-being and experience of the child delegates depend largely on the roles played by their chaperons. It is thus essential to select the most appropriate chaperon for providing the best possible assistance to the child delegates. This guideline on the selection of the chaperon aims at highlighting the criteria, process and the roles of different agencies in selecting the suitable chaperons.

Eligibility and Standard Practice

The safety and well-being of children participating in the SAIEVAC meetings/consultations and related events are the responsibilities of the accompanying adults/chaperons. Each child delegate is required to have a chaperon assigned. It is important that the responsibilities of the accompanying adult/chaperon are fully explained and agreed upon before departure to the venue together with the child delegate and his/her parents/guardians.

The accompanying adult/chaperon should ideally be someone who is familiar with the child, who speaks the same language as the child does and with whom the child has a
Guidelines

Chaperons:

The responsibility of the designated accompanying adult/chaperon includes ensuring the child’s safety, security and wellbeing at all times during the SAIEVAC event and throughout their stay away from home. The detailed responsibilities of the chaperons have been mentioned in a separate Guidelines for the Chaperons that should be read, understood and accepted by the chaperons before assuming their role.

The following major eligibility criteria have been prescribed for the selection of the chaperons:

1. The chaperon should not have any criminal/administrative record of child abuse or any form of violence against children;
2. The chaperon should be in good physical and mental health condition to perform the prescribed roles of an accompanying adult/chaperon;
3. If the accompanying adult/chaperon is also going to support the child as a translator, s/he should not be any person who may be in a position to or have reasons to manipulate the child’s opinion or limit the child’s full participation; In this case, the chaperon should possess the required language skills and ability to support the child with the translation to and from the official language of the meeting/consultation;
4. It would be desirable (but not mandatory) that the accompanying adult/chaperon have prior national or international experience of accompanying and supporting children as an accompanying adult/chaperon. In any case, the accompanying adult/chaperon should be familiar regarding the logistics involved in traveling to and participating in the concerned meeting/consultation including but not limited to the route and mode of transport, immigration procedures (as may be applicable), etc.
5. The accompanying adult/chaperon should be willing to and capable of addressing the special needs of the child (such as medication or other health concerns, disability, etc.);
6. The accompanying adult/chaperon should have a sense of accountability and responsibility; and shall be a person who would not perform or show any harmful behavior (such as drinking alcohol, smoking, harassing or abusing, etc.) throughout the period during her/his roles as chaperon;
7. The child and her/his legal guardian should be informed, consulted and comfortable with the choice of the chaperon;
8. The accompanying adult/chaperon should not be a person who has an obligation to bring another person or his/her own child with him/her in the meeting/consultation.
Selection Process

The selection process for the chaperon will begin with the announcement for the meeting/consultation by the SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat. SAIEVAC’s national government mechanisms in collaboration with the NACGs will then contact the concerned child and identify as well as select potential chaperons based on the prescribed eligibility criteria. SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat shall be kept informed of the updates. The SAIEVAC’s national mechanism shall make the final decision regarding the selection of the chaperon in close consultation with the concerned child and the responsible team members at SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat.

Responsibilities of Different Agencies

SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat [SRS] will be responsible for extending the invitation to the child through the national mechanisms. SRS will also designate a person at the Secretariat to facilitate children’s participation in the meeting/consultation.

SAIEVAC’s Government Mechanism shall contact the parent or legal guardian of the concerned child in collaboration with the NACGs (National Action and Coordinating Groups on Action against Violence against Children) to identify potential chaperons. The national mechanism will explain the purpose of the meeting/consultation to the child and his/her parent/guardian with reference to the background documents shared by SRS. Based on the communication with the parents/guardian of the child, the potential chaperons will be identified by the national mechanisms with reference to the prescribed eligibility criteria. The most appropriate chaperon will be selected in consultation with the concerned child, parents/guardians and the responsible team members at SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat. The selection of the accompanying adult/chaperon should be done on objective basis by the national mechanism and shall ensure that there is no discrimination in any ground or of any form.

The ratio of the number of accompanying adult/chaperon to the number of child should be preferably 1:1 and should never exceed 1:2 provided that the chaperon is capable of and is in a situation of performing the prescribed roles and responsibilities of chaperon (and translator if applicable) for both the children. The national mechanisms will ask the guardian/parent of the child to sign two copies of the consent form, one to be retained by the guardian/parent of the child and the other to be carried by the chaperon.

After the selection of the chaperon, SRS will communicate the child protected related information and logistic information (including travel, accommodation, etc.) with the chaperon. The national mechanisms (usually NACGs) are expected to explain the roles and responsibilities of the Chaperon (including their role as translators if applicable) to the concerned chaperon as well as the child delegate. Further, the guidelines for media activities should also be explained to the chaperon as well as the child delegate.

For additional information, please refer to the ‘Guidelines for Chaperons’.