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PROTECTING CHILD RIGHTS IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR **TRAINING NOTES FOR HOTEL SECURITY PERSONNEL**



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Child-Friendly Tourism

Child-friendly tourism is an approach to tourism that aims at the formation of tourism environments in which children are protected from all forms of violence, where they are healthy and safe and where they can play and learn, in keeping with the aim of maintaining child rights in the tourism sector. In this context tourism businesses should:

- Take measures to ensure the health, hygiene and safety of children on their premises,
- Offer services aimed at promoting the healthy development of children,
- Protect child rights in employment for tourism,
- Protect children from all forms of violence and sexual exploitation in tourism,
- Inform personnel and clients of child-friendly tourism,
- Develop child-focused social and environmental awareness.



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These Training Notes are intended to inform hotel security personnel about what they should do, should they come across or suspect the sexual abuse or exploitation of children.

Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in Tourism

One of the greatest risks for child-friendly tourism is the sexual abuse or exploitation of children on premises of accommodation companies. Sexual abuse is defined as any form of sexual activity that takes place between a child and an adult, or two children who are in a relationship of impropportionate responsibility, trust and power due to age or developmental differences. Sexual exploitation is the sexual use of children for any kind of gain including cash, goods, other material or other forms of gain (such as forcing children into prostitution, their use in pornography, sale for sexual purposes).

Those Carrying Out Abuse/Exploitation

- They are not only men and may be women. There is no typical age range or marital status for these people.
- They may come from any social, economic or cultural section of society.
- While they may not normally be sexually oriented towards children at the travel beginning, they may carry out abuse or exploitation if they find amenable
- Or they may be travelling for purposes of sexual exploitation or abuse.

Children Under Risk

- Lost or living in the street,
- Has been discriminated against due to race, ethnic identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability,
- Refugee, alone (unaccompanied) children
- Has faced violence within his/her family or has been neglected by his/her family,
- Children who live in poverty in tourism regions and who do not have access to education are at greater risk compared to other children.

By Turkish law, the sexual abuse and exploitation of children are crimes. It is a legal responsibility to report to authorities (the police, the gendarmerie, the prosecutor's office) in case of having reasonable suspicion of such crimes or witnessing them. Hotel security personnel may encounter many situations that rise suspicions of sexual abuse or exploitation while doing their jobs. On the following page, causes for suspicion regarding these crimes and what should be done in this case have been listed. Although some of the causes of suspicion may not amount to much on their own, they should be taken up together with other factors that lead to suspicions, should they come to the attention of staff members.

Suspicious Circumstances

- Child is dropped off/picked up from hotel by car late at night
- Children waiting or aimlessly spending time in the lobby, without registration at the hotel
- A customer staying by themselves at the hotel arrives with a child
 - This happening in the evening/ at night, the clothing of the child and his/her behaviour could increase suspicions.

What Should be Done

- Private security personnel of the hotel should note down the numberplate of the car and a description of the child and others in the car.
- Security personnel should not allow the child to go directly to the room and direct him/her to reception.
- If there is strong suspicion that the child will be subjected to abuse/exploitation, action should be taken, the manager or the highest authorised member of staff should be alerted and the situation should be reported to the police.
 - The child is observed for a while. If he/she continues to wait alone he/she is approached politely and asked whether he/she is a customer of the hotel. The child is told that they can contact anyone they want at reception if they need help. Information is given to reception about the observed child.
 - The utmost effort should be made so that reception does not overlook the situation. Security personnel should also inform reception, which will check-in clients arriving at the hotel with a child.

The notes to be taken by security personnel in situations listed above should include the following:

- Signs leading to suspicion (what is seen at entry and exit, dialogue overheard, impressions)
- Date and time of the suspicious incident
- Name of the personnel who encountered the suspicious situation

What Should Be Done In Case Of Witnessing A Crime Or When Immediate Intervention Is Necessary

From the moment when sexual abuse/exploitation is confirmed or there is strong evidence that it will take place barring an intervention:

1- The child and the abuser should not be left alone under any circumstances and the child should be taken to a secure location.

- If sexual contact has taken place, the child should not change or wash until the police arrive.
- The child should be approached tenderly and his/her immediate needs (food, toilet) should be met.
- Physical contact of any kind with the child, such as hugging, kissing, taking by the arm, even if for purposes of expressing tenderness and support or calming the child down, should be avoided under such circumstances.

2- The manager or the highest authorised member of staff should call the police as soon as possible¹, especially noting that the victim is a child and having the police speak to the child over the phone if possible and information should be sought on what is to be done until the officers arrive.

3- Until the police arrive, private security personnel, or a few members of hotel staff could take measures to prevent the alleged abuser from running away.

- Article 90 of the Penal Procedure Law gives everyone the power of "temporary arrest" should they witness a crime and the alleged perpetrator may run away or it may be impossible to identify him/her later on.
- Both the victim and the alleged abuser should be kept away from other hotel customers to the extent possible.

¹ If the area is under the jurisdiction of the gendarmerie, call 157 for the gendarmerie.

4- To prevent evidence from being lost or destroyed, the location of the incident should be kept as is until the police arrive. If the incident took place in a room, the room should not be cleaned and equipment in the room, such as telephones, should not be used.

5- A record of events should be prepared to be handed over to the police and the record should include:

- ID or passport information of the alleged abuser,
- Information about the victim,
- Where and when (date, time) the incident took place,
- The way in which the incident took place,
- Detailed information on the grounds for suspicion if a report has been filed on reasonable suspicion,
- Which decisions the hotel took and how before intervening in the incident and information about the manager responsible,
- Information regarding the hotel personnel who intervened in the incident.

6- Once the police arrive at the scene of the incident: The records kept should be handed over and full cooperation with the police should be maintained.

The aim of any intervention by the hotel is to ensure the protection of children in emergency situations and to prevent evidence from being destroyed to the extent possible. Hotel personnel should not try to gather evidence or punish the alleged abuser by themselves, however vicious the crime may be, and should avoid inappropriate interventions. Such behaviour could not only endanger their own security, but also violates the presumption of innocence.

Communicating with Children in Cases of Abuse/Exploitation

- In cases involving children being subjected to violence or those that may require an emergency intervention, the staff member communicating directly with the child should introduce himself/herself and explain how they may help the child to instil trust. At this point, other personnel who may have heard about the incident should not come into contact with the child, whether they act out of good will or curiosity. The staff member communicating with the child should take care not to give too much information about himself/herself and try to focus on the immediate needs of the child.
- Children who have been subjected to sexual exploitation (forced into prostitution, sold for sexual purposes) may not be comfortable around security forces. Nevertheless, promises that cannot be kept (such as “We will never allow something like this to happen again”, “Your family will not know”, “We will not call the police”, “We will not tell of what happened) should not be made.
- Given the trauma the child has been through, he/she should not be made to recount the incident and not many questions should be asked about the incident. The testimony of the child will be taken by authorities.
- During the entire process, clear language that is appropriate to the age of the child and that he/she will understand should be used.
- During and after such incidents, children may experience mental confusion, intense anxiety, anger and surprise. These emotional states may cause children to react in a variety of ways (such as providing false information, an exaggerated account of what happened, avoiding communicating, acting aggressively etc.). It should not be forgotten that such reactions by the child are normal under the circumstances and the child should by no means be approached by dismissing what he/she has to say, judgementally, accusatorily or angrily.



For more information on subjects covered by these Training Notes, please visit the website www.cocukdosturizm.org

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