



RELAF

Por el derecho a vivir
en familia y comunidad

To child protection authorities in Latin America.

Advice for implementing protections to guarantee the right to family and community life in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the wake of the health emergency caused by COVID-19, its progression at a regional level and its impact on children, their families and their communities, we are calling on public authorities to take steps to prevent separation and implement adequate care and protection measures. Our public institutions will be tasked with taking decisive action to protect children's rights put at risk by the pandemic and its implications.

In this complex and unprecedented situation, we ask that governments impose and apply human rights standards, in particular, the preservation of the right to family and community life, protection and provision of suitable care alternatives, when necessary. We ask them to take note of and replicate successful practices implemented by governments in Latin America and in other regions. The measures must be in accordance with Protection Systems and programs that aim to prevent separation, provide alternative care, and maintain links and contact with families and communities in whatever circumstances children find themselves.

RELAF, the Latin American Network for Foster Care, urges governments and authorities to, amongst other measures and protections:

- 1) **Recognise that child protection services, programmes, and actions, are necessary and indispensable, and therefore must not be suspended but instead continue to operate in the context of COVID-19.**
- 2) Coordinate different authorities and efforts in the field of public, health, economic, social and educational policies, within the framework of Protection Systems, to promote the best decisions both communally and for each individual child, according to **their best interests**.
- 3) Rethink family and community integration through **strengthening and creating better links with caregivers, giving them access to and taking into account the advice of healthcare and medical professionals**.
- 4) **Rule out abrupt measures to interrupt children's contact** with family and communities due to COVID-19.
- 5) With respect to this, **plan and maintain links with foster care and adoption families**, throughout this time and update and advise them.



- 6) **Continue without interruption the search for, evaluation, preparation and registration of foster and adoptive families**, with specific methods appropriate to each situation.
- 7) **Reject any initiative that would mean creating new residential homes of institutions, or that put existing ones at risk.**
- 8) **Increase controls, supervision and support for all alternative care residential and family arrangements.**
- 9) Provide **victims of domestic and family violence with access to public services**, to help to prevent and lessen the effects of social distancing.
- 10) Produce **accessible information about the needs and conditions of children and teenagers**, giving them access to knowledge and allowing them to participate in this; particularly those in exceptional circumstances.
- 11) **Take responsibility for teaching** children and adolescents how to take care of themselves and their health, as advised by health and medical professionals.
- 12) **Listen to and help to ease children's anxieties** about the threat of illness to them and those close to them.
- 13) Establish a coordinated strategy of **intersectoral communication** within each country and collaboration between authorities throughout the continent and the world.

For its part, RELAF affirms its commitment to work with organisations and institutions, providing support to create necessary tools and measures to protect the rights of children and their families in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We reaffirm our mission to produce and identify knowledge about and protections for human rights. We are counting on the efforts of governments and civil society, who are already active in facing this crisis. We call on them to identify weaknesses in their responses. We continue working to train and strengthen all those involved, to better understand the current situation and positive initiatives, and therefore analyse the situations of children and their families to make the best possible decisions.

RELAF Consultive Council