

On Call Africa (OCA) Dealing with Case Reports

Purpose and scope

The purpose of this document is to provide procedures for dealing with case reports that breach OCA's Policies, where the violation is:

- Against staff or members of the public,
- Perpetrated by staff, volunteers, partners, or associated personnel.

Procedures

Report is received

Reports can reach the organisation through various routes. This may be in a structured format such a paper form, a letter, e-mail, text, or message on social media. It may also be in the form of informal discussion or rumour. If a staff member hears something in an informal discussion or chat that they think is a concern, they should report this to the appropriate staff member in their organisation.

In the event of an immediate safeguarding concern or if after discussing the concern with the safeguarding lead it is decided local action is required: please refer to the OCA safeguarding code of conduct which can be found in the safeguarding policy and clearly displayed in all clinical and administrative areas. This includes the central office, accommodation and training facilities used by OCA staff and volunteers.

If a concern is disclosed directly to a member of staff, the person receiving the report should bear the following in mind:

- Listen
- Empathise with the person
- Ask who, when, where, what but not why
- Repeat/ check your understanding of the situation
- Report to the appropriate staff member (see below)

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The person receiving the report should then document the information, gathering as much information using a Case Report Form Template. This should be completed immediately and not longer than one working day.

Safeguarding concerns should be sent directly to the OCA Programme Lead, or where the case relates to OCA’s Programme Lead this should be directed to the Board of Trustees Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Cases regarding accidents, complaints or whistleblowing should be sent directly to the OCA Director, or where the case relates to the OCA Director this should be directed to the to the Board of Trustees Designated Safeguarding Lead.

In the instance a case is received in the post it will be scanned and forwarded as indicated on the letter.

- OCA Programme Lead, Rachel Lynch
Email: rachel@oncallafrica.org
Mobile: +260 967554052
- OCA Director, Ben Margetts
Email: ben@oncallafrica.org
Mobile: +260 762039644
- OCA Trustee and Safeguarding Lead, Gavin McColl
Email: gavin@oncallafrica.org
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Due to the sensitive nature of concerns, confidentiality must be maintained during all stages of the reporting process, and information shared on a limited ‘need to know’ basis only.

If the reporting staff member is not satisfied that the organisation is appropriately addressing the report, they have a right to escalate the report, either up the management line, to the Board, or to an external statutory body. The staff member will be protected against any negative repercussions because of this report. See OCA Complaints Policy and Disclosure of Malpractice in the Workplace Policy.

Assess how to proceed with the report

Within two working days appoint a Decision Maker for handling this case report

Determine whether it is possible to take this report forward:

- Does the reported incident(s) represent a breach of OCA’s safeguarding or any other policy?
- Is there enough information to follow up this report?

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If the reported incident does not represent a breach of OCA's Policies but represents a risk to others, the report should be referred through the appropriate channels (e.g., local authorities) if it is safe to do so.

If there is insufficient information to follow up the report, and no way to ascertain this information (for example if the person making the report did not leave contact details), the report should be filed in case it can be of use in the future, and look at any wider lesson learning we can take forward.

If at any point in the process of responding to the report (for example during an investigation) it becomes apparent that anyone involved is a child under the age of 18 that was not already acknowledged, the Decision Maker should be immediately informed before proceeding.

If the decision is made to take the report forward, we will ensure that we have the relevant expertise and capacity to manage the case. We will seek immediate assistance, through external capacity if necessary.

Decide on next steps

The Decision Maker will decide the next steps as soon as possible but not longer than two working days. These could be (but are not limited to):

- No further action (for example if there is insufficient information to follow up, or the report refers to incidents outside the organisation's remit)
- Investigation is required to gather further information
- Immediate disciplinary action if no further information needed
- Referral to relevant authorities

If the report concerns associated personnel (for example contractors, consultants, or suppliers), the decision making process will be different. Although associated personnel are not staff members, we have a duty of care to protect anyone who encounters any aspect of our programme from harm. We cannot follow disciplinary processes with individuals outside our organisation, however decisions may be made for example to terminate contracts and or participatory involvement based on the actions of others.

If an investigation is required and the organisation does not have internal capacity, we will identify resources to conduct the investigation.

Appoint roles and responsibilities to investigate report

If not already done so, a decision maker will be appointed for the case. The Decision Maker will be a senior staff member, not implicated or involved in the case in any way.

If the report alleges a serious violation, we may hold a meeting that involves:

- Decision Maker
- Person who received the report
- HR Representative
- Safeguarding Lead

If required, the members of the meeting will decide the next steps to take as soon as possible and not longer than two working days from receipt of the case, including any protection concerns and support needs for the survivor and other stakeholders.

Make decision on outcome of investigation

The Decision Maker will decide based on the information provided in the investigation report and in accordance with existing policies and procedures for staff misconduct.

If at this or any stage in the process criminal activity is suspected, the case will be referred to the relevant authorities *unless this may pose a risk to anyone involved in the case*. In this case, the Decision Maker together with other senior staff will decide how to proceed. This decision will be made bearing in mind a risk assessment of potential protection risks to all concerned, including the survivor and the Subject of Concern.

Refer case where appropriate

In the UK and Zambia, OCA will where available, appropriate, and necessary refer cases to the Local Authority Safeguarding Board, Police, Independent Safeguarding Authority and Charity Commission.

Where available, survivors will be signposted and or cases referred to local partners who can offer further support. All decision making on support will be led by the survivor.

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Assess any protection or security risks to stakeholders

For reports relating to serious incidents: We will undertake an immediate risk assessment to determine whether there are any current or potential risks to any stakeholders involved in the case and develop a mitigation plan if required.

We will continue to update the risk assessment and plan on a regular basis throughout and after the case as required.

Conclude the case

We will document all decisions made resulting from the case clearly and confidentially as soon as possible and not longer than five working days.

We will store all information relating to the case confidentially, and in accordance with OCA policy and local data protection law.

We will record anonymised data relating to the case to feed into organisational reporting requirements (e.g., serious incident reporting to Board, safeguarding reporting to donors), and to feed into learning for dealing with future cases.