



# ETHICAL RESEARCH INVOLVING CHILDREN

Centre for Children  
and Young People



*Childwatch*  
INTERNATIONAL  
RESEARCH NETWORK

unicef   
Office of Research

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OTAGO  
  
Te Whare Wānanga o Ōtago  
NEW ZEALAND

# INTERNATIONAL CHARTER FOR ETHICAL RESEARCH INVOLVING CHILDREN

As a research community working with children, we are committed to undertaking and supporting high quality ethical research that is respectful of children's human dignity, rights and well-being. The following seven commitments guide our work:

## **ETHICS IN RESEARCH INVOLVING CHILDREN IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY**

We, the research community, including all who participate in undertaking, commissioning, funding and reviewing research, are responsible for ensuring that the highest ethical standards are met in all research involving children, regardless of research approach, focus or context.

## **RESPECTING THE DIGNITY OF CHILDREN IS CORE TO ETHICAL RESEARCH**

Ethical research is conducted with integrity and is respectful of children, their views and their cultures. Involving children respectfully requires that researchers recognise children's status and evolving capacities and value their diverse contributions.

## **RESEARCH INVOLVING CHILDREN MUST BE JUST AND EQUITABLE**

Children involved in research are entitled to justice. This requires that all children are treated equally, the benefits and burdens of participating are distributed fairly, children are not unfairly excluded and that barriers to involvement based on discrimination are challenged.

## **ETHICAL RESEARCH BENEFITS CHILDREN**

Researchers must ensure that research maximizes benefits to children, individually and/or as a social group. The researcher bears primary responsibility for considering whether the research should be undertaken and for assessing whether research will benefit children, during, and as a consequence of, the research process.

## **CHILDREN SHOULD NEVER BE HARMED BY THEIR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH**

Researchers must work to prevent any potential risks of harm and assess whether the need to involve the individual child is justified.

## **RESEARCH MUST ALWAYS OBTAIN CHILDREN'S INFORMED AND ONGOING CONSENT**

Children's consent must always be sought, alongside parental consent and any other requirements that are necessary for the research to proceed ethically. Consent needs to be based on a balanced and fair understanding of what is involved throughout and after the research process. Indications of children's dissent or withdrawal must always be respected.

## **ETHICAL RESEARCH REQUIRES ONGOING REFLECTION**

Undertaking research involving children is important. Ethical research demands that researchers continually reflect on their practice, well beyond any formal ethical review requirements. This requires ongoing attention to the assumptions, values, beliefs and practices that influence the research process and impact on children.