

Internet Policy Pertaining to Orphanage Children

Without permission, it is illegal to have information that identifies specific children in orphanages in any type of public way, including websites, myspace.com, facebook.com (and other such personal spaces), mass e-mails, newspapers or other news media. This would include any pictures (even without names in the caption) or usage of names of children or orphanages that anyone might be able to use to identify specific children.

Ecuadorian law makes any such offenses punishable with possible jail time and fines.

Please keep this in mind and keep yourselves, OSSO and our Project Directors out of trouble and out of serious legal problems. In terms of text-only information, keep specific names and identifying information off personal websites and mass e-mails. Make sure that if you send any pictures to family or friends via the internet that they know they are not authorized to forward those pictures or identifying information to anyone.

We are privileged to get to know the children in the orphanages. Their lives and their stories are private and protected by law. They have been victims of so much in their short lives. Help us protect their right to privacy. Many of them are in the orphanages under protective custody because of bad family situations. In some cases their families do not know where they are.

If I adopted a child with a delicate, traumatic past, I would not want that story available to the general public.

Many private orphanages in Ecuador have their own websites and display pictures of their own children. Most do not identify them or tell their personal stories, but some do. For many reasons, this is a means of keeping their orphanage running—pictures catch people's hearts, and they in turn become supporters of the orphanage, donating funds toward the running of the orphanage and being involved in that orphanage being run well.

For over six years OSSO has not had pictures of kids from the orphanages on our website. They were not our children, and we did not have permission to do so. OSSO now has its own orphanage, Los Pequeñitos de OSSO. We can, if we choose, display pictures/videos of our children on our website, and we will be doing this. We can also give permission for others to use pictures of the kids in our orphanage.

If others would like to place pictures of our kids on the internet they need to ask for written permission to do so, and we will give them a written reply.

Criteria for granting permission to use pictures/videos, names or identifying information about the children from Los Pequeñitos de OSSO:

- it's still a possible invasion of the children's privacy to display their pictures, names or stories in any public way: permission will not be granted unless the perceived benefit to the children is greater than the perceived invasion of privacy
- pictures/videos cannot be tied to the children's names or identifying stories

- the children must be portrayed in a positive light; while pitiful pictures of dirty, ragged children may be very effective at getting an emotional response, Ecuadorian culture considers this an assault on the children's dignity, as do we
- a personal pictorial travelogue or scrapbook has great personal value; permission will not be granted to have pictures of our children on sites whose primary purpose is of a personal nature, and not tied to a specific effort to advance the cause of the children
- we need to know the website/media where pictures/videos, or identifying information, will appear and reserve the right to withdraw permission if not presented in an appropriate manner

The only acceptable means of permission is *formal written permission* from OSSO's Rexburg office (technically, we will have to get this permission from OSSO-Ecuador, which is a separate nonprofit organization we have in Ecuador, and they will in turn require a written, signed letter explaining what type of pictures and information will be used and how).

OSSO cannot grant permission to display photos/videos, or other information, on any child in any other orphanage besides our own.

For anyone who has participated with OSSO to display pictures/videos, or other information, without permission puts OSSO, our employees and our mission at risk.

Rex Head, M.D.
OSSO's Executive Director

* Finding adoptive families is very important, but it is also surrounded by difficult legal and cultural issues; improperly posting pictures, or other identifying information, could actually block the adoption of the children.