

CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE ORPHANAGES POLICY

There are many reasons that information about the children in the orphanages must be kept private. Some of the children have been taken from abusive situations and their information must be kept private to protect them. Ecuadorian law regulates how information about these children is released or spread. In most cases, without permission, we cannot divulge any private information that we learn about the children in the orphanages. There are also other, less obvious, but still important reasons—one of the most important is that it's the desire of the *orphanage staff that this information be kept absolutely private. For this reason we have the following very important rules.

1. No personal picture-taking devices are to be taken into the orphanages, and only the official OSSO camera, in the hands of the designated photographer, is to be used for taking pictures inside the orphanages.
2. No one outside the program is to be allowed into the orphanages without prior permission from the *orphanage staff as well as the Project Directors. This includes parents, friends, Spanish teachers, etc.
3. When at the orphanages you're not to let anyone in the door or gate unless they're part of our program or are known by you to be part of the *orphanage staff.
4. If you see anyone at the orphanage that you're not sure is welcome there, immediately ask the *orphanage staff.
5. You're not to talk to anyone who isn't in our program about anything that occurs inside the orphanage. This includes Spanish teachers and people you meet in Ecuador.
6. You can talk to family members or friends, who don't live in Ecuador, about what you do in general, but you should not use identifying information like complete names, dates or where a child is from or was found. You should always tell them that all information is confidential and should not be shared with others. Pictures and stories with full names or other information which would allow someone to identify a child should not be placed on publicly available websites or publicly available parts of personal web pages (like blogs) and like Facebook, MySpace, etc., newspapers or other news media or sent in mass e-mails or shared in any public way.
7. According to Ecuadorian law it is illegal for anyone to help an adoptive family choose a specific child to adopt. That means that you cannot tell even your parents that you want them to try and adopt a certain child. If anyone asks you about adopting a child from Ecuador you can tell them to contact the OSSO office for further information. Handicapped or older children may be an exception to this rule. If you want to try and find a family for a child that may be hard to place for adoption, talk to the Project Directors first who will then talk to the *orphanage staff and get permission to use specific information.
8. When adoptive families come to Ecuador to adopt children we work with, we're limited in what we can tell them and how much we can interact with them. Without permission from the *orphanage staff we cannot tell them anything about the child, the orphanage or how to contact us outside the orphanage. If they ask (and they're likely to) just politely tell them that you cannot give them any information without permission from the *orphanage staff. This rule also applies if you run into the families outside of the orphanage.
9. The privacy of the adoptive families should also be protected and you should not ask them specific personal information.

10. All pictures or scrapbooks or other such information (i.e. anything you want given to the families) must be given through the Project Directors to the *orphanage staff.
11. None of the above rules is intended to hide or ignore inappropriate conditions or behavior. If you witness any behavior towards a child that you feel is inappropriate or abusive you are to immediately discuss it with OSSO's Project Directors. You're not to discuss it with outside people. OSSO will not ignore serious problems. If there's a serious concern it should be dealt with between OSSO's leadership and the orphanage leadership.

These rules are very important and all have very specific reasons, though these reasons may not be obvious to everyone. Just because you don't think a specific rule is important doesn't give you permission to break it. If you have questions, ask. Violation of these rules could jeopardize the safety, well-being or rights of the children we love and work with, or at the very least, jeopardize OSSO's or your right to work with them.

*When the term orphanage staff is used it means someone in the orphanage who has the authority to act or make decisions about the issue being discussed. It does not mean that you can justify your actions based on the approval of any worker. If in doubt, get permission from the Project Directors.