

## **PICTURE POLICY REGARDING ORPHANAGE CHILDREN IN CUENCA**

No one associated with OSSO (including leaders, volunteers, employees or visitors) is allowed to take any pictures or videos of the children we work with without specific permission from both OSSO's Project Directors and the head of the institution that is responsible for the children. Employees at the orphanages do not have the authority to give permission to take pictures. There might be occasions when they encourage you to do so, but you cannot without permission from OSSO's Project Directors as well as the head of the institution.

Besides the privacy issue with taking pictures there have been safety problems with taking pictures of the children—there have been times that volunteers have been so absorbed taking pictures that they were not properly watching and taking care of the children.

*Failure to follow these rules may result in volunteers being sent home early or even with OSSO being thrown out of the orphanages.*

**Cuenca baby/toddler orphanage (Orphanage “A”)**—each volunteer can take pictures/videos\* here during one shift every other week (for Casas, this can only be during morning shifts) and as approved and coordinated by the Project Directors with the orphanage's staff—a list is given to them of who can take pictures and when; only one person can be taking pictures/videos at a time; you cannot take pictures/videos unless there's someone else (a worker or a volunteer) specifically watching the kids while you do this; though there's not a limit on how many pictures/videos\* that can be taken during this time, there are specific places and times when taking these pictures/videos\* is allowed (volunteers will be informed of these specifics during orientation—an exception might be made for special circumstances like a birthday party for the children, but you'll be informed of this in advance if this is the case); the children must look very nice, like if you were taking them to a photo session; you're not allowed to take your camera to this orphanage unless it's your turn to take pictures (see above); this policy applies to all children from this orphanage, regardless of where they are (hospital, sidewalk, mass, OSSO house, at OSSO's Little Ones, etc.)—basically, this means that you're not allowed to take any picture of any child from here unless they're inside the orphanage and the above conditions are met; employees telling volunteers they can take pictures when they really don't have the authority to do so has been a recurring problem here (\*talk to the Project Directors about this); no pictures of these children displayed at any time in the OSSO house

**All other orphanages**—we try not to take pictures all the time because we worry that this privilege will be taken away, so just keep this in mind and be good about it; don't be secretive about taking pictures, but try to be low-key when taking pictures—don't abuse this privilege; pictures should be group pictures overall instead of individual pictures; it's best to ask permission before you take any pictures, but in general we have open permission to take pictures of the kids, as long as they're nice pictures

## **IMPORTANT HISTORY**

We have a lot of history at the baby/toddler orphanage because we've been working there since 1999. When we first had volunteers here, we could take pictures basically whenever we wanted. As time went on, volunteers started stretching this privilege and the nuns became more concerned about how many pictures were being taken and what they were being used for; suspicion even came into play. The open picture policy evolved into the volunteers needing to ask every time they wanted to take pictures, and then it was up to the whim of the nun in charge whether she gave permission or not.

In early 2001, the privilege of taking pictures came to a screeching halt due to the irresponsibility and poor judgment of many volunteers leading up to this point, including volunteers sneaking pictures (taking them when they knew it was prohibited), and several volunteers were sent home for breaking this important rule. We begged and pleaded and the head nun finally agreed to allow each volunteer to take two pictures total right before they went home.

Time went on and we continued having volunteers break the picture policy by sneaking pictures, which resulted in their being sent home. The nuns knew our volunteers loved the children, but they kept being deceived by the acts of a few volunteers, and the picture policy got stricter. The picture policy in April 2003 was: "no pictures or videos can be taken at any time; with the Project Directors' and the head nun's permission, the group leaving can take two "group, not individual" pictures of the children from one camera (the pictures must be shown to the head nun to approve and copies given to her)." Two pictures total for the entire group.

Over the years many volunteers were bitter and resentful at the few who ruined it for everyone else. The gravity of the situation wasn't only about taking pictures and having something to remember the children by but was about the risk that the nuns would get fed up and possibly decide to kick us out (which they threatened many times over the years).

Thankfully, volunteers started taking the picture policy seriously (but still with occasional volunteers who felt it didn't matter and chose to risk everything for everyone, including the children, since if we were to get kicked out of the orphanage, they would have suffered incredibly by our not being there). Slowly, after building up trust, the picture policy was relaxed slightly in October 2004 to be that "the group leaving can take three "group, not individual" pictures." And then relaxed even further in April 2006 to be "the group leaving can take some (this number communicated to you by the Project Directors) "group, not individual" pictures." Eventually it was further relaxed to be what it currently is.

For most of the volunteers who broke the picture policy over the years, they didn't realize how serious the repercussions were until the consequences were already decided by their actions. Usually the excuse was "but I didn't understand how important that rule was" or "I didn't know it was that big of a deal" as they were having to pack because they were being sent home.

The picture policy is extremely important. It's taken many years to earn back a lot of trust, and now we need to keep it. Imagine how you'd feel if by your actions and poorly thought-out decisions you prevented future volunteers from being able to take *any* pictures...or the children

suffered because we got kicked out... **Please respect the picture policy and the seriousness of it for everyone involved.**