



*companion primer*

# THE CORE ELEMENTS

**CAFO | RESEARCH center**  
*Applied Research for Vulnerable Children + Families*

For leaders committed to excellence in care for vulnerable children and the communities that care for them, CAFO's Center on Applied Research for Vulnerable Children and Families is a trustworthy bridge between research, practice and care reform that provides the best available guidance to inform the most effective care for children.

To learn more, visit [CAFO.ORG/OVC](https://CAFO.ORG/OVC)

# INTRODUCING THE CORE ELEMENTS



Get a swift, customized review of program strengths and opportunities



Use the accompanying tools to improve areas for growth to do better for kids and families



Share results with donors and other stakeholders to show what is working and ask for help to improve

We are all on a journey toward better care for vulnerable children together.

[CAFO.ORG/COREELEMENTS](https://CAFO.ORG/COREELEMENTS)



FA

## FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Good stewardship and ethical financial practices are critical to organizational longevity and wellbeing.



GG

## GOOD GOVERNANCE

A healthy and engaged board will provide guidance, oversee, and support to the mission of an organization.



CC

## CODE OF CONDUCT

A clearly defined code of conduct outlines the expectations, responsibilities, and proper practices for staff and volunteers.



CM

## CASE MANAGEMENT

All placements, including family reintegration, require thorough assessment, training, and follow-up support by professionalized staff to ensure child welfare and protection.



QS

## QUALIFIED STAFF

Qualified staff possess both the technical skills and community knowledge to effectively fulfill their position and to support the mission of the organization.



ME

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

M&E is a process that helps improve performance and achieve results. Its goal is to improve current and future management of outputs, outcomes, and impact. Employing monitoring and evaluation practices ensures adequate progress toward an organization's intended outcomes.



## CHILD PROTECTION

Proactively safeguarding children from harm is first priority.



## CONFIDENTIALITY

Measures are taken to protect the confidentiality of all children and families served.



## CHILD FOCUS

Care decisions are on a case-by-case basis in order to ensure the child's health, safety, security, and long-term wellbeing.



## **SD** SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Wise spiritual instruction and guidance - including freedom to question and seek- help a child form a foundational sense of their value, identity, and purpose as beings created in God's image and loved by Him.



## **CC** CONTINUITY OF CARE

Long-term health of vulnerable children takes priority over short-term success.



## **P** PARTNERSHIP

Healthy and strategic partnership maximizes the impact of any OVC-serving organization. Learning from and working with other organizations allows for better quality of services.



## LOCAL EMPOWERMENT

The primary role of western organizations service cross-culturally is to empower local involvement in caring for OVC.



## GATEKEEPING

Good gatekeeping established processes for decision-making that ensure children receive alternative care only when necessary, and that children and families receive the supports that are in their best interest.



## CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Every child has the God-given right to healthy physical, spiritual, educational, emotional, and social development.



**SN**

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Children who have learning difficulties, physical disability, or emotional and behavioral challenges require programming suited to their needs.



**FS**

## **FAMILY STRENGTHENING**

Actively engaging in, or partnering with organizations that engage in helping families stay intact is a foundational component for any organization that seeks to support vulnerable children.



**I**

## **REINTEGRATION**

Reintegration into the family and community is a long-term process, requiring great care to assess and support the health of a family.



**AFC**

## ALTERNATIVE FAMILY CARE

Both the Bible and social science affirm that the ideal environment for children is a safe, permanent family. When not possible for a child to live with biological family, an alternative family placement like adoption or foster care is preferable.



**RC**

## RESIDENTIAL CARE

If all family placements have been explored and residential care deemed necessary, it should be small and family-like as possible, and organized around the rights of the child.



**STV**

## SHORT-TERM VOLUNTEERING

Short-term missions and vision trips carry with them the potential for both great good and tremendous harm, especially when we hope to benefit children.

# CORE ELEMENTS SELF-REVIEW FAQ'S

## WHAT IS THE SELF-REVIEW?

This is a free self-review for any organization worldwide caring for vulnerable children in international contexts.

## WHY IS THE CORE ELEMENTS SELF-REVIEW THE FIRST STEP?

This review simplifies measures of success into 21 principles and then evaluates each program's current level of health with a numerical score per principle. Using your scores, the next step is to learn your strengths and weaknesses. Identifying these will guide your journey through the 21 core elements of success training modules.

## WHO CAN COMPLETE THE SELF-REVIEW?

Any organizational and program leaders working in international contexts.

## WHAT IF MY ORGANIZATION HAS MULTIPLE SITES?

Each site can complete the Core Elements self-review.

## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO COMPLETE?

30 minutes.

## HOW OFTEN DOES MY ORGANIZATION TAKE THE SELF-REVIEW?

The Core Elements self-review is an annual process.

## DOES MY ORGANIZATION HAVE TO BE RELIGIOUSLY AFFILIATED?

No, your organization does not.

## DOES MY ORGANIZATION HAVE TO BE A CAFO MEMBER?

No, the Core Elements self-review is open worldwide for free to any organization serving in international contexts.

## CAN I SEND THE SELF REVIEW TO MY PARTNER ORGANIZATION?

Yes, you can.

## NEXT STEP:



Take the Core Elements  
Self-Assessment at  
[CAFO.ORG/COREELEMENTS](https://CAFO.ORG/COREELEMENTS)

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