
FOUNDATION CHILD





FOUNDATION CHILD FOR STUDY AND RESEARCH INTO CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

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Curriculum Vitae

The Foundation Child for Study and Research into Childhood and Adolescence was **established in 1998** by the association S.O.S. Il Telefono Azzurro ETS – National Helpline for the Prevention of Child Abuse.

The Foundation is funded through initiatives promoted by the Foundation itself, as well as contributions, legacies, and donations.

Mission

Fondazione Child's mission is to **promote a child-centred culture** through the study and advancement of knowledge on physical and mental health, behavioral and emotional development, and psychopathology in children and adolescents.

The Foundation recognizes that disorders and dysfunctions arise from complex, lifelong interactions between biological and environmental factors. Research in biology, pediatrics, developmental psychology, child psychiatry, neuroscience, genetics, and epidemiology provide the basis for identifying risk and protective factors and for developing effective preventive and therapeutic interventions.

The Foundation is committed to **fostering motivation, competence, and scientific excellence** among researchers and clinicians working in child and adolescent mental health worldwide.

Objectives

- Support research in developmental psychopathology, with particular focus on biological, cognitive, emotional, and social development.
- Promote research methodology skills among mental health professionals working with children and adolescents.

- Support and integrate multidisciplinary approaches involving child psychiatry, pediatrics, psychology, genetics, neuroscience, molecular biology, and epidemiology.
- Translate scientific evidence into clinical practice, prevention strategies, and public awareness through training and dissemination activities.

Research

The Fondazione acts in the following key research areas:

- Training of Young Researchers
- Career Advancement Support
- Support for Research Programs and Projects. Priority research areas include short- and long-term impact of abuse, neglect, and other forms of trauma, innovative and effective methods of prevention and treatment, impact of early-life experiences on brain development and behavior.
- Innovative Training and Scientific Communication.

Fondazione Child places strong emphasis on the expansion of international research groups and the development of global communication networks among clinicians and researchers.

To this end, the Foundation supports a wide range of initiatives, including:

- Multidisciplinary working groups
- Exchange programs with foreign universities
- Scientific consultations and expert meetings
- Training activities involving researchers at different stages of their careers.

Since 2000, Fondazione Child has **promoted research and academic activities in childhood and adolescence** by allocating scholarship contributions to the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia for a Ph.D. program in Human Psychobiology, aimed at advancing research on genetic origins of childhood and adolescent disorders, trauma, emergencies, and mental health conditions.

In June 2003, with Fondazione Child's support, the same University established a research grant for the program "Educational Models on Network Services Quality Management in Emergency Situations Involving Children and Adolescents."

High Level Meeting: Youth Mental Health, Human Development and Artificial Intelligence – United Nations General Assembly Week

On September 24, 2026, during the week of the United Nations General Assembly, Fondazione Child, in collaboration with Fondazione S.O.S. Il Telefono Azzurro ETS, convened the high level meeting "**Youth Mental Health, Human Development and Artificial Intelligence**" in New York, bringing together representatives and experts from international institutions, academia, civil society and the technology sector to advance dialogue on the implications of Artificial Intelligence for children and young people.

The meeting provided a space for dialogue on **how technological innovation can contribute to the wellbeing and development of children and young people** while safeguarding their rights, dignity, and agency. Discussions explored how AI can support, rather than replace, meaningful human relationships; strengthen young people's digital literacy and capacity to participate; and be developed and governed through evidence-based approaches, shared responsibility, and safety by design.

Bringing together perspectives from science, public policy, civil society and the technology sector, the meeting sought to contribute to a common understanding of the **opportunities and challenges presented by AI** and to encourage cooperation towards a **human-centred approach** to technological development. At its core is a shared commitment to ensuring that children and young people remain at the centre of decisions concerning the technologies that are shaping their present and will influence their future.

High Level Conference: The Dignity of Children and Adolescents in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

On **November 12, 2025**, the Foundation hosted the international conference “**The Dignity of Children and Adolescents in the Age of Artificial Intelligence**” at the Apostolic Chancery in Rome.

The event brought together leading voices from academia, institutions, science, and technology to explore the ethical, legal, social, and anthropological implications of Artificial Intelligence. Continuing the path of the Child Dignity Alliance, the aim of this conference was **to foster dialogue across disciplines and cultures, promoting a shared vision of digital humanism rooted in respect, empathy, and responsibility**.

On the occasion of the high-profile international meeting, a **Declaration of intent** was signed calling on governments, institutions, companies, and citizens to jointly build a new human pact for the digital era based on the dignity and protection of the youngest. The document was presented on November 13 to Pope Leo XIV, who received the conference participants in an audience at the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican.

Child Dignity in the Digital World

In **October 2017** leaders from academia, research, civil society, government, media, and religion gathered in Rome for the **World Congress “Child Dignity in the Digital World”**, to discuss online child sexual abuse and its impact on children’s lives. A **Declaration of Rome** was adopted, built on the principle that every child has a right to dignity and safety, and on the assumption that this problem can only be solved through global solutions involving governments, faiths, companies, and institutions:

“In this era of the internet the world faces unprecedented challenges if it is to preserve the rights and dignity of children and protect them from abuse and exploitation. These challenges require new thinking and approaches, heightened global awareness and inspired leadership.”

On 6 October 2017 the Declaration of Rome was **presented to Pope Francis** who said, “You have pointed out a variety of different ways to promote concrete cooperation among all concerned parties working to combat the great challenge of defending the dignity of minors in the digital world. I firmly and enthusiastically support the commitments.”

On 6 June 2018 the **Child Dignity Alliance** was born, a “coalition of the willing.” The CDA was a volunteer-based initiative with seven working groups, coordinated by a one-person Secretariat.

On 20 November 2018 the UAE convened the **Interfaith Alliance Forum** with leaders of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Baha’i, Sikhism, and others. During the Forum, senior faith leaders and representatives from governments, law enforcement agencies, international organizations, NGOs, civil society, and academia discussed the risks faced by children in the digital age and spoke of the actions that need to be taken to protect the digital dignity of children.

On 14 and 15 November 2019 leaders from many fields, including major technology companies, met at the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences to discuss and commit to the concrete action needed to protect children in the digital world.

Warsaw Statement

Following the Warsaw Conference “How to Ensure and Promote Mental Health During War: Assessing and Responding to the Impact of Trauma on Child and Adolescent Development”

The **Warsaw Conference (27-28 May 2022, Royal Castle, Warsaw)**, organized by the Foundation Child and Telefono Azzurro, gathered mental health professionals, academics, policymakers, civil society organization, clergy, and private sector representatives, resulting in an urgent call for action to support Ukraine in addressing mental health needs of their children.

The Conference, followed by an expert workshop, included extraordinary participation of many experts and leaders in the international mental health community, as well as Ukrainian and Polish colleagues. It resulted in an **urgent call for action to support Ukraine in addressing mental health needs of their children** and formed a significant starting point with a credible scientific base for the process that will move from words to actions.

Project Erice – Empowerment and Resilience for Children Everywhere

ERICE is an initiative promoted by a group of Palestinian, Israeli, and Arabic-Israeli specialists, child psychiatrists and psychologists, supported by members of international academic community. Guided by the belief that children everywhere are to be cherished and that respect for and protection of children is a shared human value, ERICE works to **promote human rights, joint action, training, and interventional projects** focused on enhancing the well-being of children and families affected by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Established in **2004** by **Foundation Child and IACAPAP**, ERICE has organized several International and Regional Meetings that have promoted a profitable exchange and dialogue. This has allowed participants to share reflections and good practices through presentations and workshops. At present, **six pilot projects** have been partially funded:

- Assessing Post-Traumatic Distress in Infant and Young Children: A Multi-Dimensional Approach (Ruth Feldman, Eyad Hallack, Miri Keren)
- Children in War: A Look at the Inner World of Palestinian and Israeli Children via their Dreams (Shafiq Masalha, Esti Galili)
- The Development of an Evidence Guided Approach to Child Mental Health in Arab Populations in Palestine and Israel (Eyad Hallak, Sami Hamdan, Orit Krispin, Alan Apter)
- An Evaluation of Special Education Programs for Palestinian and Israeli Children (Viveca Hazboun, Nadia Barakat)
- Pilot Surveillance of PTSD among Children in Israel and the Palestinian Authority (Omaira and Morshid Farhat, Itamar Lurie, Mustafa Qossoqosi, Hazem Ashour)
- Enhancing the Psychosocial Health and Empowering the School Age Children in Gaza (Fadel Abu Hain, Jabr Abu Naja).

The Rome Group and the Rome Declaration

In **July 2003**, a group of leading experts in child trauma from North America, Australia, Europe, and Asia gathered in Rome (the **Rome Groupe**) to present their clinical findings and research advances as well as to seek out a way to integrate them with the current state of knowledge in this area. The meeting was organized under the auspices of Foundation Child and the International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions.

This initiative led to the **Rome Declaration on Caring for Children in Wartime, Terrorism and Natural Disasters**, calling on governments worldwide to invest in prevention, treatment, and research for children affected by trauma:

“Untold millions of children, families and communities have been devastated by war, terrorism, disaster, and maltreatment. Respect for children is the mark of a civilized society.”

The Rome Group continues to promote global standards of care and evidence-based interventions for traumatized children, families, and communities.

International Scientific Meetings and Conferences

- High Level Meeting: Youth Mental Health, Human Development and Artificial Intelligence – United Nations General Assembly Week
- High-Level Meeting on Child Dignity in the Artificial Intelligence Era – Rome (12-13 November 2025)
- Facing Challenges and Proposing Perspectives in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry – Rome (2019)
- Empathy, Neuroscience and Conflict Transformation – Rome (2017)
- Understanding the Impact of the New Diagnostic Classification Systems on the Understanding of Mental Disorders – Pre-Congress SOPSI, Rome (15 February 2011)
- The Impact of the New Diagnostic System on the Future of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry – Florence (2 April 2009)
- New Perspectives on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry – Florence (31 March 2009)
- XIII Congress of the European Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (ESCAP) – 25-29 August 2007
- 6th European Research Seminar in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: Clinical Studies – Design, Assessment and Evaluation – Bocca di Magra (7-12 May 2006)
- 3rd EMACAPAP Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Training Seminar: Autism Spectrum Disorders and Research Design – Djerba (3-7 April 2006)
- 5th European Research Seminar in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: Clinical Research – Design, Assessment and Evaluation – Bocca di Magra (10-15 April 2005)
- Second Research Seminar in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health in the Eastern Mediterranean: Anxiety Disorders – Diagnosis and Treatment, and Research Project Design – Sharm El Sheikh (26 February-2 March 2005)
- XXI S.I.N.P.I.A. National Congress: Clinical Treatment in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry – Modena (7-11 November 2004)
- Career Prize to Professor Giovanni Bollea – Italian Embassy in Berlin (24 August 2004)
- XVI World Congress of IACAPAP: Facilitating Pathways – Care, Treatment and Prevention in Child and Adolescent Mental Health – Berlin (22-26 August 2004)
- Fourth European Research Seminar in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: Treatment Evaluation in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry – Camposampiero (14-20 March 2004)
- Two Days’ Study Seminar on New Perspectives in Pediatrics and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry – Parma (10-11 March 2004)
- Second Research Seminar in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health in the Eastern Mediterranean: Depression and Related Disorders – Sharm El Sheikh (27 February-4 March 2004)
- Children Protection in Times of War, Terrorism and Natural Disasters – Rome (16-19 July 2003)
- Autism: From Research to Clinical Practice – Rome (17-21 March 2003)
- Children and War: The Effects of War Conflicts on Developmental Age – Venice (2 October 2002)
- Third European Research Seminar in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: Design and Assessment –

Camposampiero (29 September-4 October 2002)

- A Day's Study Dedicated to Prof. Donald J. Cohen: Child and Adolescent Care – From the Institutions to Scientific Communities – Treviso (5 June 2002)
- Caring for Children and Adolescents with Mental Disorders: Setting WHO Directions – Geneva (31 January-1 February 2002)
- Second European Research Seminar in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: Development Psychopathology and Treatment Evaluation – Camposampiero (3-8 September 2001)
- Traumas in Developmental Psychopathology – Treviso (4 September 2001)
- Child Abuse and Neglect – Parma (4-5 July 2001)
- Genetics of Autism – Modena, Bologna (17-23 March 2000)
- Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health in the Eastern Mediterranean – Sharm El Sheikh (10-15 February 2000)
- Trauma, Emergency and Development in Child and Adolescence – Treviso (28-29 June 1999)

Training Seminars

- **17th International Research Training Seminar in Child & Adolescent Psychiatry** – Rome (3-8 March 2023)
- **16th International Training Research Seminar in Child & Adolescent Psychiatry** – Rome (5-10 September 2021)
- **15th International Training Research Seminar in Child & Adolescent Psychiatry** – Rome (12-17 May 2019)
- **14th International Training Research Seminar in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry** – Bertinoro (15-20 April 2018)
- **13th International Training Research Seminar in Child & Adolescent Psychiatry** – Bertinoro (12-17 March 2017).

Our Partners

- Yale University, Child Study Center
- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- World Psychiatric Association
- IACAPAP (International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions)
- SOPSI (Società Italiana di Psicopatologia)
- The Child Mind Institute
- ICMEC (International Center for Missing and Exploited Children)
- S.O.S. Il Telefono Azzurro ETS
- Missing Children Europe
- European Psychiatric Association

President

Prof. Ernesto Caffo



Professor Ernesto Caffo is an Italian child and adolescent neuropsychiatrist, academic, and advocate for children's rights. He is founder and **President of the S.O.S. Il Telefono Azzurro ETS and the Foundation Child**. He is Senior Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia.

He is a Board Member of the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC) and Missing Children Europe (MCE), Scientific Coordinator of the Global Health Coalition, and Scientific Coordinator of the Italian Society of Psychopathology (SOPSI) Working Group on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

From July 2003 to July 2007, he served as President of the European Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (ESCAP) and currently holds the title of Past President. From 2001 to 2004, he served as Vice President of the Italian Society of Child and Adolescent Neuropsychiatry (SINPIA).

Throughout his career, he has been a member of numerous leading professional societies in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry, including the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), the International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions (IACAPAP), the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN), the International Forum for Child Welfare (IFCW), and the European Forum for Child Welfare (EFCW).

In 2005, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) elected him an Honorary Member in recognition of the excellence of his scientific research and his outstanding contributions to the field at the international level.

Since 7 October 2017, he has been a member of the Steering Committee of the Child Dignity Alliance. Since February 2018, he has served as a member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, to which he was appointed by Pope Francis as its only Italian member at the time. The Commission serves as an advisory body to the Holy Father on matters concerning the protection of minors and vulnerable adults, identifying, and promoting best practices and initiatives to safeguard them from sexual abuse within the Church.

