NEW ROOTS MONTESSORI

PRE-SCHOOL

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

As an organisation which exists to improve the care, support, and empowerment of children we are committed to protecting, and promoting the well-being and protection of children, especially those they work with.

This policy, therefore, aims to set out details and guidelines of what that means in contexts in which we work. These contexts include, but are not limited to: training events, camps, kids' clubs, and other interventions.

Any breach of this policy, procedures or behaviour and child discipline guidelines will result in non-compliance procedures.

- We believe that every child, regardless of the circumstances of their conception and/or birth, is a uniquely created, beloved image bearer of God for whom Jesus died.
- We believe that all children are vulnerable and need to be protected by the adults in their lives.
- We promote dignity and respect for all children, regardless of age, gender, race, creed, circumstance, ability or behaviour,
- We interact with children in ways that maintain the child's sense of dignity, value, worth and belonging.
- We encourage children to relate to each other in the same manner.
- We practice age appropriate, non-violent, non-shaming methods of discipline that promote internal control.
- We allow for and promote 'trying again'.
- We listen to children.

Acknowledgements

This policy is informed and guided by:

- The South African Constitution
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Children's Act, 38 of 2005 & Children's Amendment Act, 41 of 2007

- Child Justice Act, 75 of 2008
- Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act, 32 of 20071.
- QIS Child Protection training and standards manual
- Children, Church and the Law, Greathead, E.

Definition of Terms

Child
A child means a person under 18 years of age

Staff member
A staff member is a person who has a permanent role within New Roots Montessori with a specific job description describing her/his functions within the organisation.

Volunteer
A volunteer is a person who is fulfilling certain functions within New Roots Montessori in liaison with a staff member.

Intern
An intern is a person who has a fixed term agreement to fulfil certain functions within New Roots Montessori as part of a study or mentoring program.

Visitor
A visitor is a person who comes to a project, program, or event within New Roots Montessori to observe or assist staff and volunteers with specific tasks.

Child protection officer (CPO)
The designated child protection officer is a full-time staff member within the organisation who is responsible for the implementation of the child protection policy; specifically, the handling of child abuse allegations. The role and functions of the child protection officer are outlined in the job description of the designated person.

NEED AND SCOPE FOR POLICY

The need for a child protection policy

A child protection policy is needed because:

- The well-being and protection of children are paramount
- All staff, volunteers and visitors must be clear on the protective function of New Roots Montessori regarding children.

- All staff, volunteers and visitors must share a common understanding regarding acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour towards children
- Well-established guidelines are needed to ensure the protection and well-being of children within New Roots Montessori projects and programs, with clear procedures on implementation and consequences of non-compliance.

Goals of the child protection policy

The goals of this child protection policy are:

- To ensure that New Roots Montessori function in line with legislation and best practice principles to maximise the well-being and protection of children in our care.
- To outline the principles and procedures regarding all staff, volunteer and visitor interaction with children
- To outline the principles and procedures regarding the prevention, identifying, reporting and handling of abuse
- To outline the consequences of non-compliance with this policy.

Principles of the child protection policy

This child protection policy is based on the following principles:

- All children have equal rights to be protected from harm, abuse and exploitation. Inequalities should be challenged.
- The safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of the child is both an individual and collective responsibility.
- Staff, volunteers, visitors and children who are well informed about child protection issues will be more able to create and maintain child-safe, child-friendly environments
- Children should be given opportunity to participate in creating child-friendly environments.
- Clear guidelines for staff, volunteers, visitors, and children will enhance child protection
- Being open about child protection issues and concerns must be encouraged to avoid the secrecy on which abuse thrives

- The procedures apply to all staff, volunteers and visitors of the organisation as outlined in this policy and are compulsory.
- Non-compliance of procedures will lead to the consequences as outlined in this policy.

DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

According to the Children's Act (no.38 of 2005), abuse of a child means any form of harm or ill-treatment deliberately inflicted on a child, and includes:

- Assaulting a child or inflicting any other form of deliberate injury to a child.
- Sexually abusing a child, or allowing a child to be sexually abused.
- Bullying by another child.
- A labour practise that exploits a child.
- Exposing or subjecting a child to behaviours that may harm the child psychologically or emotionally.

Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse

This is when children are hurt or injured by caregivers or other people causing cuts, bruises and fractures through excessive beating even if it is for a "genuine" reason. Use of dangerous tools for punishment to discipline a child.

It also includes child labour which is giving a child a task which is beyond her/his developmental stage. E.g. a 7-year-old carrying a 20-litre bucket of water resulting in stunted growth or carrying out tasks like herding cattle when others are at school.

It can also include giving a child substance such as alcohol or medicines, to make a child sleep so that he/she is not troublesome at night.

Neglect

This is continued failure to provide a child with basic necessities of life and adequate supervision needed for a child's maximum growth and development.

It is failure to use available resources to meet the child's needs, e.g. not taking a child for medical treatment when the clinic is free and close by. Unlike other forms of abuse, neglect is about what a caregiver does not do rather than what she/he does.

Emotional Abuse

This is the failure to provide the mental care necessary for a child's physical and emotional growth and development.

Includes constant criticism, looking down upon a child, ignoring and withholding praise and love.

It involves verbal abuse whereby children are constantly being shouted at and humiliated or frightened.

Unlike other forms of abuse, emotional abuse does not leave physical injury or scars and is often not easily recognised yet it has the greatest long-term impact.

Bullying

This is physical and emotional abuse which includes name calling, being pushed around, teased, rumours spreading about you, having possessions taken away from you usually by peers or older persons—in most cases, adults watch this happen and do nothing or little about it.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes fondling the child's genitals, penetration (inserting the penis into the child's mouth, anus or vagina as well as inserting objects into the child's mouth, anus or vagina), indecent exposure (another person revealing his or her sexual body parts to a child), using a child to earn money through sex and producing pornographic ("dirty") pictures or videos of children.

Ritualistic Abuse

This is when families and communities practice rituals that violate the rights of children.

These include:

- Girls being given in marriage (young and forced) to appease the spirits
- Male and female crude circumcision
- Initiation ceremonies
- Girls being given in marriages for economic reasons

Spiritual Abuse

Is when someone in spiritual authority misuses that authority to control, coerce or manipulate others.

Possible Signs of Abuse

Physical

- Clear cuts and bruises can be seen on the child
- Loss of confidence and lack of social skills
- Excessive fear of the guardian

Neglect

- May become malnourished
- May become street children
- May become sickly
- Sad and generally withdrawn
- Lacks self-esteem
- Poor self-concept
- Begins to perform badly at school.

Emotional

- Lack of confidence and self-esteem
- Withdrawal
- Insecurity that could lead to violence and other abnormal behaviour
- Lack of social skills
- Bedwetting and thumb/finger sucking in younger children
- Poor performance at school
- Inability to form relationships or lasting relationships.

Bullying

- Loss of self-esteem/confidence
- Refusal to go to school
- Poor performance at school

- Poor social relations
- Fear
- Depression

Sexual

- Bruises (especially in the genital areas and on the thighs, but also anywhere on the body)
- Redness of genitals
- Pain while urinating
- Itchiness of genitals
- Genital infections
- Genital discharge
- Withdrawal
- Loss of interest
- Clinging to one person, unwillingness to be left alone with a person
- Increased anxiety
- Mood swings
- Concentration difficulties
- Sleeping problems
- Nightmares
- Using words with sexual connotations that are not age-appropriate
- Increased knowledge of sexual terms and acts
- Aggression
- Auto-aggression (self-mutilation like cutting and burning)
- Feeling dirty, needing to wash him or herself over and over
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Frequent drawing or acting-out of sexual scenes
- Playing sexual games (fondling), usually with other children (usually with younger children)
- A sudden increase in gifts or money
- Absenteeism from school
- Decreased school performance
- Secretive behaviour

Ritual

- Bruising, marks on cheeks, ears and genital areas
- Sudden personality changes
- Changing in sleeping patterns
- Withdrawal and depression
- Running away from home

Spiritual

- Signs may be similar to the effects of emotional abuse and/or bullying
- Increased sense of shame for the child
- Affects the child's God concept, understanding of self and salvation

BEHAVIOUR PROTOCOLS (DO'S AND DON'TS)

General interaction of staff, volunteers and visitors with children

Expected behaviour for all types of interaction:

- Interaction with children must be warm and affectionate but display respectful boundaries.
- All activities must be age- and developmentally appropriate.
- All activities must ensure the physical and emotional well-being and safety of the child.
- Language used must be age-appropriate and convey God's heart for children.
- Lots of praise and encouragement must be used.
- Activities must develop emotional regulation, internal control, and problem-solving skills
- Children must understand activities through clear guidance and support.

Expected behaviour for the use of technology and media:

- Staff members, volunteers and visitors are not allowed to communicate with children via email, cell-phone or any internet form unless a specific message has been authorised by a senior staff member.

- No staff member, volunteer or visitor may engage children in electronic, telephonic or any type of material that contains sexual, violent or unhealthy content (including the use of foul language).

Expected behaviour for responding to cultural beliefs and local practices:

- Cultural beliefs and practices will be respected provided these beliefs and practices fall within legislation and pose no harm to children either physically or emotionally.
- Where beliefs and practices pose harm to children staff members, volunteers, and visitors must not shame the child but rather alert a senior staff member

The following cultural and local practices will not be supported and when necessary steps will be taken to ensure the well-being of a child or children who are exposed to such practices:

- Childhood marriage
- Children exploited as bread winners
- Corporal punishment
- Disabled children left unattended or being neglected
- Adolescent boys or girls being circumcised
- Children sent to work rather than attending school
- Children exposed to violent ritual ceremonies
- Children being exploited sexually
- Children being exploited to do work which hinders their basic rights to play and to receive education

Depending on the specific situation, these practices will either be addressed through education and/or be reported to the authorities when necessary.

Expected behaviour for transporting children

- Interns, volunteers and visitors may not transport children in their private vehicles without prior consent of a senior staff member
- All vehicles used for transporting children must be roadworthy and contain up-to-date licences
- Only designated persons with the necessary licences and permission may transport children.

- Transportation must be done in line with South African legislation and all road rules must be complied with at all times. Seat belts must be worn.
- Where possible, more than one adult must accompany children when transported.
- Children may only be transported when the necessary documentation has been completed e.g. excursion and indemnity forms.
- Persons transporting children may not take any detours with children, but must adhere to the purpose and route of the specified trip at all times.

Expected behaviour towards children with special needs

- Additional care must be taken to meet the needs of differently abled children and to ensure that the resources used are applicable for activities with these children.
- Staff and volunteers must take additional care to make sure that differently abled children understand the activities in which they are engaged.

Behaviour Towards Children

Staff, interns, volunteers and visitors may not engage with children in the following ways:

- Have anger outbursts in front of them;
- Criticise, belittle or humiliate them;
- Call them names or label them negatively;
- Be sarcastic towards them or use humour inappropriately;
- Abuse, pinch or hurt them in any way;
- Fail or refuse to give children the necessary support or help;
- Have inappropriate conversations with them;
- Compel them to engage in activities;
- Interact with them in a way that violates their rights or make them feel uncomfortable;
- Use foul language;
- Use them in any way to meet the adult's needs;
- Pay special attention to a particular child to the disadvantage of other children or do some children special favours as all children must be treated fairly and equally.

Discipline

From time to time children will behave inappropriately towards other children, adults, and/or property.

When addressing such behaviour remember:

- The aim of discipline/correction is to encourage responsibility and develop positive values and behaviour.
- Discipline must be age- and developmentally appropriate.
- Discipline must be applied consistently over time and with regards to all children.
- Children must be clear about rules and consequences for non-compliance.

The following disciplinary strategies may be used:

- Setting of limits and boundaries;
- Ignoring of attention-seeking behaviour;
- Re-direction;
- Time to cool down
- Helping the child reflect on action and alternatives

The following strategies may not be used in disciplining children:

- Threatening behaviour or the use of fear;
- Shouting or swearing at children;
- Manipulation or bribery;
- Using corporal punishment (spanking/hitting);
- Pinching, pulling of hair or hurting of children;
- Singling out some children as a means of humiliation;
- Punishing the whole group for the behaviour of individuals;

IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO CHILD ABUSE

Identifying abuse

Ways we become aware of abuse

- The child discloses
- Someone discloses on behalf of the child
- Someone witnesses the abuse
- The abuse is picked up through signs/symptoms

Principles to keep in mind

- Believe the child.
- Regard any complaint of abuse or inappropriate behaviour as serious.
- Children may be reluctant to disclose abuse for a variety of reasons for example due to guilt, shame, fear etc.
- Look out for signs of abuse in play.
- Act in a calm, supportive manner.
- Reassure the child he/she has the right to tell.
- Be aware that some children may not express negative feelings about the abuse right away.

What you should not do

- Make the child feel guilty;
- Push the child for more information – let them talk up to the point where they feel comfortable;
- Interrupt the child's train of thought or put words in the child's mouth;
- Cover up for high profile people;
- Make empty promises.

Reporting abuse

All alleged abuse or inappropriate behaviour must be reported to the Child Protection Officer.

Interns, volunteers and visitors must involve a staff member in any abuse related conversation with a child as soon as possible. If a staff member is the alleged abuser **do not** involve that staff member.

General guidelines

- Listen to the person who tells about the abuse attentively.
- Make notes as far as possible. If you are not able to make notes during the conversation, make notes immediately after the conversation.
- Ensure the safety of the child.
- Explain the process which will follow to the child.
- Complete the incident report form of the organisation and speak to the child protection officer as soon as possible.
- If the child needs medical attention, involve the CPO to get the child's parents/guardians cooperation to ensure medical help and make sure that the staff members at the hospital know that this is a child protection issue.

Dealing with abuse allegations

Once a complaint of alleged abuse or inappropriate behaviour has been received the following procedures must be followed:

- Make sure that the child is safe.
- Make as many detailed notes as possible and complete the Incident Report Form as soon as possible after talking with the child.
- All staff members must report the alleged abuse to the designated child protection officer who will report the matter to the relevant authorities (police or social services) through the completion of Form 22.
- The child protection officer will also be responsible to follow up on the matter and to make sure that the child receives the relevant help and support.
- The child protection officer must make detailed notes of all the steps in dealing with this matter as well as the outcomes of all inquiries and investigations. This information must be stored safely and confidentially.

- The child protection officer in conjunction with the management of the organisation will also be responsible to communicate these processes with all the relevant role-players within the organisation.

Where the alleged abuser is a staff-member, intern, volunteer, or visitor

In addition to the steps outlined above, the following steps will be taken:

- If the alleged perpetrator is a staff-member, he/she will be suspended pending the outcome of investigations and will not be allowed to have access to children of New Roots Montessori during this time.
- If the alleged perpetrator is a intern, volunteer or visitor, he/she will be excluded from all projects and will not be allowed to engage with children pending an investigation.
- If the police are involved, these suspensions and exclusions will remain in place while any criminal case is active
- New Roots Montessori will direct the alleged perpetrator to inform any other children's organisation he/she is involved in of the allegation and investigation
- If the case fails to be prosecuted for whatever reason, New Roots Montessori will conduct an internal inquiry into the matter and decide on the person's continued involvement.
- If the person is found not guilty, New Roots Montessori will work together with the person to establish conditions (e.g. supervision, monitoring, mentoring etc) for his/her reinstatement.

STAFF

Recruitment and appointment of staff

- Current staff members, and members of the board are required to obtain police clearance certificates and to sign child protection declaration forms.
- Staff and board members will be checked against the Child Protection and Sexual Offences registers.
- Police clearance certificates must be renewed every year.
- The scope and tasks of staff members must be clearly defined in job descriptions.
- Applicants have to apply in writing by completing the relevant application forms.
- Applicants are required to give the contact details of three suitable references which will be checked by the organisation in the application form.

- Applicants are required to attach a police clearance certificate with their application to ensure that they have no criminal record. Applicants with a criminal record will not be considered for appointment.
- Applicants are required to sign a child protection declaration form to indicate that they have no history whether criminal or civil of inappropriate behaviour with children or sexual misconduct in general.
- In the interview process, gaps in employment history will also be thoroughly checked.
- Appointment and subsequent interaction with children will be dependent upon judging these declarations and checks.

Induction and training of staff

As part of the induction process, all new staff members must receive training on the child protection policy and procedures.
All staff members will receive continuous training and development on child protection issues.

Topics to be included in the training:

- The organisation's view on children and responsibility towards children;
- Do's and don'ts in working with children;
- Identifying different forms of abuse;
- Procedures on the reporting of abuse or scenarios which cause concern;
- The relevant legislation e.g. UN Convention on the Rights of Children and the new Children's Act;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Child protection policy and procedures;
- Consequences for non-compliance.

After staff members have received a copy of the child protection policy, they will have to sign a letter of receipt to indicate that they have read, understand and accepted their responsibilities towards following the policy and procedures.

Monitoring of staff

All staff members will be appraised at least once a year on their knowledge of the child protection policy and procedures.

As part of the appraisal process, all staff members will be appraised on the following:

- General interaction with children;
- Implementation of discipline;
- Adherence to organisational policies and procedures.

Staff members will be given feedback on the outcome of their appraisal and receive additional training on developmental areas.

Consequences for non-compliance

- Whenever serious concern about the behaviour of a staff member is raised, management will do a thorough investigation into the matter regardless of who the person is.
- In the case of serious non-compliance with the Code of Conduct and organisational policies and procedures, disciplinary action in line with the human resource policy will follow.
- The process and outcome of this disciplinary action will be documented and stored safely.

INTERNS & VOLUNTEERS

Recruitment and appointment of interns & volunteers

- The scope and tasks of interns and volunteers must be clearly defined by permanent staff in writing before any volunteers may be used within any of the organisation's projects.
- Interns and volunteers may only work in liaison with one of the permanent staff members.
- Interns and volunteers must apply by completing an intern & volunteer application form, giving a police clearance certificate and by signing the child protection declaration form to indicate that they have no history whether criminal or civil of inappropriate behaviour with children or sexual misconduct in general.

- International interns and volunteers must present a police clearance certificate of their country of origin and if they are living in South Africa for longer than one year obtain a South African police clearance certificate as well.
- Interns & volunteers are required to give the contact details of two suitable references in the application form which will be checked by the organisation.

Training of interns & volunteers

Topics to be included in the training for volunteers:

- The organisation's view on children and responsibility towards children;
- Do's and don'ts in working with children;
- Identifying and reporting different forms of abuse and scenarios of concern;
- Child protection policy and procedures;
- Consequences for non-compliance.

Monitoring of interns & volunteers and consequences for non-compliance

- Interns and volunteers' interaction with children will be monitored by permanent staff of the organisation.
- If concern is raised by a staff member regarding the interaction of an intern & volunteer with children, this issue will be addressed with the particular volunteer by management.
- If a volunteer's behaviour causes serious concern, such a volunteer will be removed from all organisational projects immediately as the best interest of children are paramount.

VISITORS TO ORGANISATION

Screening of visitors

- All visitors to the organisation will have to be accompanied by permanent staff members at all times when interacting with children.
- Before they are allowed to interact with children, they will have to complete a form with all their contact details and be briefed by a staff member on their interaction with children.

- Visitors also have to sign the visitor form to indicate that they will agree to the ground rules of this organisation and should a breach occur, accept that their contact with the children will be terminated.

Monitoring of visitors and consequences for non-compliance

- Should a staff member feel uncomfortable with a visitor's interaction with children, this issue must be addressed immediately.
- Should the visitor fail to comply with these ground rules, the visitor's interaction with the children will be terminated as the best interest of children are paramount.

TRAINING OF CHILDREN AND CHILD PROTECTION INITIATIVES

Training of children

Children within the organisation shall receive information on protective behaviours on an annual basis.
Children will also be allowed to give input on how to make the organisation more child friendly as part of establishing a culture of child participation within the organisation.

Topics to be covered in their training will include:

- Identifying situations and scenarios which may cause them concern;
- Protective behaviours;
- Reporting their concerns;
- Preventing and reporting bullying;
- Using technology in a safe and healthy way;
- Accessing community resources on child protection e.g. Childline;
- Basic children's rights e.g. the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child.

Child protection resources for children

- The UN Convention on the Rights of a Child;
- The contact details and photo of the designated child protection officer within the organisation;
- The contact details of community resources.

Child protection initiatives

The organisation will strive to intentionally implement child protection initiatives as part of the organisation's aim of establishing a child-friendly environment.

Implementation strategies might include:

- Celebrating national and international child protection days and months;
- Implementing projects to empower children to speak up about abuse and bullying;
- Training children on life skills to reduce bullying behaviour;
- Advocating for children's rights when the opportunity arises;
- Networking closely with partners to promote child protection in the community.

ETHICS

Confidentiality pertaining to staff and children reporting abuse

- All role-players, including employees, children, visitors and volunteers of the organisation must be encouraged to report concerns without fear or hesitation.
- All persons reporting concerns must be treated with respect within a confidential system.

Storing of child protection documents

- Board, staff, volunteer and visitor information must be kept up to date including applications, police clearance certificates and child protection declaration forms.
- All minutes, memos and attendance registers pertaining to child protection issues and training within the organisation must be filed in an easily accessible way.
- All of these documents must be stored in a safe and confidential manner by the child protection officer but be made available should an inquiry arise.
- Backups of these documents must be stored in a safe and confidential manner and information on children, staff, interns, volunteers and visitors must be kept indefinitely.

REVIEW OF POLICY

Persons to give input

The following persons will get the opportunity to provide input into adjusting the child protection policy:

- Board of directors
- Staff & volunteers
- Children of the organisation
- Community stakeholders
- Networking partners

The child protection policy and procedures will be made readily available to all relevant stakeholders.

Time of review

The child protection policy will be reviewed at least once every two years.

Review procedures

Procedures for review of policy

- At the time of the review, stakeholders will be invited to make comments and recommendations in writing to the person responsible for adjusting the policy.
- These recommendations will be discussed by management and adjustments will be made, where necessary.
- The adjusted child protection policy will then be referred to the board of directors for final comment and approval.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

The following documents are related to the child protection policy:

- Incident report forms
- Consent & Indemnity forms
- Police clearance certificates
- Offenders Registers/Forms 29 & 30