

MANYANO CENTRE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL is a project of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, serving churches of all denominations as well as community organisations seeking reconciliation, empowerment and community upliftment. Manyano Centre also serves the community directly through the LIVElife programme of life skills and leadership development offered to schools and Non-Profit Organisations working with disadvantaged and vulnerable children. Children may participate in activities at Manyano Centre either as part of a church or community group, under the supervision and responsibility of adults not employed by or associated with Manyano Centre, or they may be brought to Manyano Centre for the purposes of a specific programme where the responsibility for their safety and security is shared equally by staff members and volunteers employed by the Centre and the adults representing the school or community organisation for whom the programme is being presented.

MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL recognises the paramount importance of ensuring, as far as is humanly possible, the safety and security of all children received as guests of the Centre and of protecting them from any form of harm or abuse whatsoever.

MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL accepts co-responsibility, together with the leaders, teachers, social workers or other adults who accompany the children during their stay at MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL and undertakes to ensure that

- The Centre's facilities are safe and that any potential for injury or harm is minimised or eliminated
- All staff and volunteers involved in children's programmes have received police clearance to work with children
- All activities presented as part of a LIVElife programme are supervised by staff or volunteers qualified to oversee such activities.
- All independent groups are clearly instructed to supervise children in their care and prevent them from playing on such equipment unattended by a responsible adult.
- All staff and volunteers are trained to recognise child abuse
- Clear procedures for reporting and dealing with child abuse are set in place and a Child Protection Officer appointed to deal with abuse or suspected abuse of a child at MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL
- All staff and volunteers receive training on the Child Protection Policy and are aware of the procedures to be followed (as set out below) should child abuse be suspected

DEFINITIONS

A "child" is a human being under the age of 18 years (or 21, if still at school).

"Child abuse" is a general term applicable to situations where the child may experience harm. It refers to any form of ill-treatment deliberately inflicted on a child and includes assault, inflicting deliberate injury, sexual abuse or allowing a child to be sexually abused, bullying by another person or exposing or subjecting a child to behaviour that may psychologically or emotionally harm the child, including "hazing" or corporal punishment.

WHAT CONSTITUTES CHILD ABUSE?

- **Physical abuse:** includes hurting or injuring a child and incorporates inflicting pain, drowning, intentional drugging (drugs or alcohol) or smothering (suffocating.) It includes serious and repeated injuries which do not result from accidents and which are inflicted or result from the negligence of the person in whose care the child is. It is the inappropriate use of violence or physical strength leading to developmental problems

- **Sexual abuse:** includes the sexual exploitation of a child for the sexual gratification of another person. Any child may be deemed to have been sexually abused when any person(s), by design or neglect, exploits the child, directly or indirectly, in any activity intended to lead to the sexual arousal or other forms of gratification of that person or any other person(s) including organised networks. This definition holds whether or not there has been genital contact and whether or not the child is said to have initiated or consented to the behaviour.
- **Emotional abuse:** occurs when the behaviour or words of a person has a negative effect on the emotional development (intelligence, memory, perception, attention, language and moral development) of the child. It is the continuous, repeated and inappropriate reaction to the child's emotional needs.
There are two kinds of emotional abuse: emotional abuse and emotional negligence. The first is in the form of verbal and emotional attacks on the child, and the child is threatened and sometimes isolated. The second occurs when the child does not receive appropriate attention or when the caregiver allows inappropriate behaviour (e.g. the use of drugs) in the child.
- **Verbal abuse:** includes communication by words (i.e. derogatory name calling by adults or other children, negative criticism, shouting as a form of discipline), racial taunts and anything which demeans a person's worth.
- **Spiritual harm:** can result when a person misuses his/her spiritual authority to negatively control, manipulate or dominate a child seemingly for God's purposes but in fact for their own
- **Physical neglect:** occurs when a child's essential physical needs are not met and this is likely to cause impairment to physical health and development. Such needs include food, clothing, cleanliness, shelter and warmth. A lack of appropriate care, including deprivation of access to health care, may result in persistent or severe exposure, through negligence, to circumstances which endanger the child.

APPROPRIATE DISCIPLINE

A child needs discipline and boundaries set in a secure and loving environment. This is essential for his/her development into a person who feels secure and loved, is self-confident, self-disciplined and able to deal with the stress of life. It is not punishment. Although discipline does involve correction (which is a form of punishment), it also involves instruction and affirmation. The goal of discipline is to help the child learn right from wrong, to respect the rights of others and to know what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Discipline should therefore involve not only the correcting of wrong or negative behaviour, but also rewarding and praising acceptable or positive behaviour.

In light of the above, MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL undertakes to enforce the following:

PHYSICAL SAFETY

General:

- Ensure all facilities and equipment in good working order and observe commonly accepted safety precautions
- Ensure a trained First Aid officer is available (for groups participating in a LIVElife programme)
- Ensure that control measures for access to children's venues are not compromised

Swimming Pool:

- Swimming pool securely fenced off and the gate padlocked when the pool is not in use.
- Spring-loaded, self-closing gate installed with latch mechanism set 1.6m above the ground
- Life buoy and rope available in the pool area for use in an emergency
- Visible notices warning that children must be accompanied by an adult at all times (for visiting groups arranging their own programme)

- Provide a responsible adult to oversee all swimming activities (for groups participating in a LIVElife programme)

Climbing Wall

- Conduct a safety inspection of the wall, pins, brackets, rope, harnesses and helmets every month, recorded in a maintenance log
- Restrict access to the foot of the climbing wall when not in use
- Visible notices warning that children may use the wall only under the supervision of a trained climber (for groups arranging their own programme)
- Provide a trained, certified climber to oversee all climbing activities (for groups participating in a LIVElife programme)

Team-Building Activities

- Conduct a safety inspection of all team-building and obstacle course equipment and structures every month, recorded in a maintenance log
- Visible notices warning that children may use these structures and equipment only under the supervision of a responsible adult, and instruct all groups arranging their own programme of the need to be vigilant at all times
- Provide a responsible adult to oversee all team-building activities (for groups participating in a LIVElife programme)

PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Ensure all staff and volunteers assisting with the LIVElife programme refrain from smacking, pushing, forcefully restraining any child, or using physical strength or violence to control behaviour (unless the child is in grave physical danger)
- Refrain from using corporal punishment in any form
- Terminate the involvement of any staff member or volunteer found guilty of physically abusing any child on MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL property, whether such child is in the care of an independent group or participating in a LIVElife programme run by MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL

SEXUAL ABUSE

- Ensure that no staff member or volunteer is ever alone with a child in a bedroom, bathroom etc. Insist that at least 2 adults are present in any counselling situation involving a child participating in a LIVElife programme
- Ensure that behaviour of other children in the group during “free time” (particularly at the swimming pool) is appropriate and does not involve indecent exposure, lewd suggestion or sexual teasing
- Encourage staff members and volunteers to report to the Child Protection Officer any instance of suspected sexual abuse, especially if a child has confided specific information to his/her group facilitator
- Terminate the involvement of any staff member or volunteer found guilty of sexually abusing any child on MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL property, whether such child is in the care of an independent group or participating in a LIVElife programme run by MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL

EMOTIONAL AND VERBAL ABUSE

- Ensure that staff and volunteers are trained to treat all children with respect and dignity and address them with language and tone of voice that is authoritative but non-threatening, and to be aware of the way in which their peers or other responsible adults address them (unless the child is in grave physical danger)
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers refrain from bad language, sarcasm or slurs, but rather use encouragement and affirmation to promote good behaviour
- Train staff and volunteers to be on the lookout for bullying and to intervene when necessary
- Train staff and volunteers to be sensitive to expressions of emotional negligence or inappropriate behaviour and to report to the Child Protection Officer any child suspected of suffering such abuse.

- Terminate the involvement of any staff member or volunteer found guilty of emotional or verbal abuse of any child on MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL property, whether such child is in the care of an independent group or participating in a LIVElife programme run by MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL

SPIRITUAL HARM

- MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL is a project of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. All activities and interactions are based on strong Christian foundations, with the emphasis on Lifestyle Evangelism rather than (but not excluding) overt proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. All groups requesting a LIVElife programme are invited to include Christian devotions in their activities, but this is not a prerequisite to their participation, and requests to not include any Christian emphasis are respected. A simple theology of unconditional love and grace and a joy-filled life (John 10:10) forms the background to devotional input. MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL undertakes to guard against any staff member or volunteer applying pressure or manipulating any child to conform to or accept any belief system against their will, and will terminate the involvement of any person perceived to be inflicting spiritual harm on any child.

PHYSICAL NEGLECT

- Train staff and volunteers to be on the lookout for signs of physical neglect in any child participating in a LIVElife programme and report any suspected instances to the Child Protection Officer for follow up with the appropriate authorities.

APPROPRIATE DISCIPLINE

- Ensure that the correction of unacceptable behaviour on the part of any child does not involve corporal punishment, verbal or emotional abuse.
- Withholding of special privileges (e.g. swimming, hiking) for a period of time, counselling, rewarding good behaviour and affirmation will be the preferred method of correction.

CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER

A Child Protection Officer is a person appointed by the MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL Board to

- Oversee and facilitate the implementation of the Child Protection Policy as outlined above
- Take the necessary and prescribed steps when reports of suspected abuse of any child are received.
- Institute any disciplinary procedures against any staff member or volunteer suspected of breaching the Child Protection Policy as outlined above

Mrs Ruth Leverton is the Child Protection Officer for MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF VOLUNTEERS

- All volunteers will be asked to sign and abide by the MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL Child Protection Policy
- They will be asked to sign a declaration of criminal convictions as part of the application process and police clearance to work with children will be obtained
- For all applicants a reliable character reference will be obtained, and applicants will be asked about previous work with children
- All volunteers will receive training about the MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL's Child Protection Policy. They will be given a copy of the policy as well as the LIVElife Code of Conduct and will be required to sign a declaration that they have received and understood it.
- The Child Protection Policy will be made available to the public via the Manyano Centre website and by having a hard copy available for perusal in the office.
- All employees, volunteers, teachers, parents and children will have access to child friendly reporting procedures, including contact details for reporting possible child abuse.

COMMUNICATION ABOUT CHILDREN

- Communication about children will use pictures that are decent and respectful, not presenting them as victims. Children should be adequately clothed and poses that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive should be avoided.
- Website and other promotional materials will, where possible, not use digital images of children without formal permission of the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child(ren). This permission should be in writing.
- Personal and physical information about a child that could be used to identify the location of the child will not be used on the website or in any other form of communication about the child.

PRESCRIBED STEPS TO BE TAKEN WHEN REPORTS OF SUSPECTED ABUSE OF A CHILD ARE RECEIVED

Immediate action

Should a staff member or volunteer observe or receive any information about actual or suspected abuse within the context of MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL activities he/she must immediately inform the Child Protection Officer. Where appropriate the matter will be referred for further investigation.

Any person who has knowledge or suspicion that a child is at risk must report this to an appropriate full-time staff member of MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL, who must consult the Child Protection Office. Together they will determine what action to take.

MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL undertakes to

- Take seriously any concerns raised
- Take positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subject of any concerns;
- Support children, parents, staff or volunteers who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns
- Act appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation
- Be guided through the child protection process by the principle of “the best interests of the child”
- Listen to and take seriously the view and wishes of the child
- Work in partnership with parents/carers and or other professionals to ensure the protection of children

Reporting child abuse by someone outside MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL

If a worker suspects that a child is being abused by a family member or other people, he/she must follow the procedure described below:

- Note the date and time you identified the abuse
- Write a report, using the child’s own words as far as possible
- Note the reason for suspecting abuse
- Report his/her concerns to the Child Protection Officer

Reporting child abuse by someone inside MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL

If any person suspects that a child is being abused by a MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL staff member, teacher or volunteer, the following procedure applies:

- Note the date and time the suspected abuse was identified
- Write a report, using the child’s own words as far as possible
- Note the reason for suspecting abuse

- Report the matter to the Child Protection Officer

Confidentiality

The issue of confidentiality is of the utmost importance when dealing with issues and concerns regarding possible abuse. MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL staff members and volunteers must exercise extreme vigilance in protecting information and must pass on this information via the reporting process as described. Any matters regarding the abuse or the matter in general must only be discussed within the above mentioned reporting structure. The status of the child suspected of being abused should not be disclosed to any persons outside of the reporting structure without the informed written consent of the child.

Confidential Record Keeping

Any concerns, allegations or disclosures must be written down at the time or as soon as possible after the concern has been raised. Records must be signed and dated.

Records must be kept in a safe place which is not accessible to those outside the reporting process. Records must be locked away. Information may only be shared with relevant parties and it must always be done in such a way that confidentiality is maintained.

External procedures

The South African Police Service is governed by law to:

- Receive and investigate complaints;
- Obtain sworn statements; and
- Arrest the alleged offenders

PRESCRIBED STEPS TO BE TAKEN AGAINST ANY STAFF MEMBER OR VOLUNTEER SUSPECTED OF BREACHING THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

A Disciplinary Hearing, in accordance with the procedures laid down by the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, shall be instituted. Any staff member or volunteer found to have abused a child while they were a staff member or volunteer at MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL will be subjected to immediate dismissal. MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL may also pursue legal action against the former staff member or volunteer.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

All MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL staff members and volunteers are obliged to sign the MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL Child Protection Policy and are obliged to adhere to all of its contents.

DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE

MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL considers acceptance of the contents of the Child Protection Policy a precondition of any relationship with MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL for any and all staff members, volunteers, teachers and social workers or Non Profit Organisations involved specifically involved in children's programmes at MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL.

The policy should be signed and dated before commencement of this relationship. MANYANO CENTRE, PAARL will keep the Declaration of Acceptance on file. The staff members, volunteers, teachers, social workers and other responsible adults must retain the remainder of the policy in safe keeping.