

Child Protection and HIV/ AIDS Policy

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1 Introduction

Statement of commitment to child protection

The philosophy of Stepping Stones Montessori School is as follows:

“Stepping Stones Montessori School is dedicated to the global Montessori philosophy and offers a stimulating learning environment that is child-centred, culturally diverse and relaxed; where young children are nurtured and encouraged to be environmentally conscious, independent thinkers.”

In addition to this philosophy, all staff employed by Stepping Stones Montessori School have an obligation in terms of the Children's Act (2010) to ensure that the children in their care, whilst on the school properties, receive the highest level of protection possible by working towards the standards outlined in this document.

2 Children's rights

Every child has the right

1. to a name and a nationality from birth;
2. to family care or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment;
3. to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services;
4. to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation;
5. to be protected from exploitative labour practice;
6. not to be required or permitted to perform work or provide services that are inappropriate for a person of that child's age; or place at risk the child's well-being, education, physical or mental health or spiritual, moral or social development;
7. not to be detained except as a measure of last resort, in which case, in addition to the rights of the child under section 12 and 35, the child may be detained only for the shortest appropriate period of time, and has the right to be kept separately from detained persons over the age of 18; and treated in a manner, and kept in conditions, that take account of the child's age;
8. to have a legal practitioner assigned to the child by the state, and at state expenses, in civil proceedings affecting the child, if substantial injustice would otherwise result; and not to be used directly in armed conflict, and to be protected in times of armed conflict;

3 Definitions

Child Abuse:

1. Physical Abuse

Includes hurting or injuring a child, which incorporates inflicting pain, drowning, intentional drugging (drugs or alcohol) or smothering (suffocating), where there is knowledge, or reasonable suspicion, that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

2. Sexual Abuse

This is the exploitation of a child, consensual or not, 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 including organized 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.

3. **Emotional Abuse**

Repeatedly rejecting, humiliating or denying the worth or rights of a child as a human being.

4. **Verbal Abuse**

Communication by words (i.e. derogatory name calling by adults or other children, negative criticism, yelling as a form of discipline), vocal tones and accompanying body language and attitudes, which demean a person's worth.

5. **Environmental Risks**

The physical environment in which the child finds itself can be hazardous to the physical safety of the child, whether through negligence or intent, or control measures for access to children's venues are compromised.

6. **Physical Neglect**

This occurs when a child's essential 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.

7. **Non-organic Failure to thrive**

Children who significantly fail to reach normal growth and development milestones (i.e. physical growth, weight, motor, social and intellectual development) where physical and genetic reasons have been medically eliminated, a diagnosis of non-organic failure has to be established.

In most cases, child abuse will be as the result of deliberate behavior. However, in exceptional cases through disabling causes (such as substance abuse or mental health problems) a parent or caregiver may not be in control of their behavior and child abuse may occur. However, the cause of the abuse may be of little consequence to the abused child. It is therefore important that these exceptions are nevertheless dealt with under the school's Child Protection procedures.

4 **This policy applies to:**

1. All staff employed by Stepping Stones Montessori pre-school;
2. Student teachers in training who attend Stepping Stones Montessori for teaching practice;
3. Substitute or temporary staff;
4. Lecturers/trainers who hold teacher training sessions on the school properties whilst children are present;
5. Extra-mural staff who teach children at the above school;
6. Donors/sponsors or any other persons who have access to the children;
7. Volunteers who assist on over night school outings or camps;
8. Parents of children at the school;

The above mentioned will hereafter be referred to as "*concerned parties*".

This policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years and is subject to change should there be a reason, whether legal or other.

5 **Staff Recruitment Policy**

1. All prospective employees, volunteers and substitute staff will be informed of the Child Protection Policy and will be asked to sign a declaration of criminal convictions as part of the policy.
2. All employees, prospective employees, volunteers and substitute staff may be subject to a police check if the organization deems it to be necessary.
3. For all applicants a reliable character reference will be obtained, (preferably in writing) and attention will be given to any area of concern relating to child protection.

4. All permanent staff will be given a copy of the Child Protection Policy and be required to sign a declaration that they have read and understood it.
5. All staff volunteers and substitute staff will receive information about the policy. They will be given a copy of the policy to read and be required to sign a declaration that they have read and understood it.
6. Individuals who are hired as independent contractors, who will spend time on the premises in the presence of the children, will be given a copy of the policy to read and be required to sign a declaration that they have read and understood it.
7. Volunteers with the schools will be monitored by the Child Protection Officer to ensure that confidential information concerning children and their families is not misused and kept confidential.

6 Child Protection Officer

The appointed Child Protection Officer at Stepping Stones Montessori pre-school is: Jennilee Petersen (principal).

7 Obligation by all concerned parties

1. Should any of the concerned parties to whom this policy applies receive information about or observe actual or suspected abuse at any of the schools, he or she must immediately inform the appropriate Child Protection Officer. Where appropriate, the matter will be further investigated.
2. Should any of the concerned parties to whom this policy applies have knowledge or suspicion that a child is at risk, he or she must report this to the appropriate Child Protection Officer, who will determine what action to take.

8 Behaviour protocols

Behavior protocols are rules of appropriate and proper behavior, which are designed to protect children but are also intended to protect adults from false accusations of inappropriate behavior or abuse. These protocols apply to all concerned parties employed by or visiting the schools.

1. Concerned parties must be concerned about perception and appearance in their language, actions and relationships with minors and children.
2. Concerned parties should always treat the children in their care with respect.
3. Discrimination, prejudice, or oppressive behavior or language in relation to any of the following is not acceptable: race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality or political views.
4. Concerned parties must not fondle, hold, kiss, hug or touch minors in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way. To avoid misunderstanding it is recommended that a child be asked for permission before holding hands.
5. Concerned parties should not do anything for the children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves.
6. Concerned parties may not act in a way that shames, humiliates, belittles or degrades children.
7. Where possible and practical the "two adult rule" wherein two or more adults supervise all activities where minors or children are involved and are present always, should be followed.
8. Concerned parties need to be aware that the adult is always considered responsible even if a child behaves seductively. Adults should avoid being placed in a compromising or vulnerable position.
9. Concerned parties and visitors who participate on outings such as school camps must not stay alone overnight with one or more children or minors, whether in staff accommodation, project premises or elsewhere.
10. Inappropriate behavior towards children by concerned parties is grounds for discipline and ultimately, dismissal.

9 Children's Awareness of Rights

Children should be made aware of their rights through discussions during group time using appropriate programs and themes. Children's rights include child-to-child and child-to-adult behavior.

Children will be made aware that:

1. Hitting or any other physical violence by a peer or adult is unacceptable.
2. Name calling and teasing by a peer or adult is unacceptable.
3. Racial, gender, religious discrimination or any form of exclusion is unacceptable.
4. Each child has the right to be spoken to and treated with respect by their peers or adults.
5. A child's possessions will be treated with respect by peers and adults.
6. Children have the right to say "no" if they are inappropriately touched or handled by a peer or adult.

10 Discipline Procedures for Children

The use of physical discipline or verbal abuse is a dismissible offence.

As a general guideline, the child should be made aware that a key part of growing up is learning how to deal with the results of one's actions.

Substitute staff, students and new staff need to ask permanent staff to intervene.

Appropriate verbal discipline may be used, and the following steps should be adhered to (In the case of a physical fight, children may be separated by physical restraint):

1. Establish where possible what happened/why the child is acting in an inappropriate or unacceptable way. Help the child to express their feelings and communicate and do the same with the other children who were involved.
2. Ensure the child/ren's feelings are acknowledged.
3. If the child was hitting another child, try and find out where the anger is coming from and discuss other options to release it.
4. Explain to the child why their behavior is not acceptable.
5. Redirect the child away from the conflict/situation in a positive manner or let the child make other activity choices when appropriate.
6. Explain the consequences should the behavior recur.
7. Should the negative behavior be repeated, ask the child to remove them self from the activity or environment.
8. Allow the child to sit away from the main activity and think about why their behavior is unacceptable
9. The child may not be isolated or left alone.
10. The child may not be kept for longer than 5 minutes away from the main group or activity (pre-school age-1 minute per age of child).
11. Once the concerned party has discussed the situation with the child and reinforced the positive and appropriate behavior, the child may return to the activity.
12. The child should apologise to any peers or teachers if necessary.
13. In extreme situations and after consultation with the principal, the parents may be contacted and asked to collect their child.
14. The school's Incident Report form needs to be filled in where two or more children were involved in an incident between each other involving harassment, bullying or physical injury of any sort.

11 Safety

The concerned parties should ensure the following:

External and perimeter of school:

1. All perimeter gates are to be kept closed and locked always.
2. Only permanent staff can open any gates, and then only to people with whom they are familiar.
3. If staff observe any suspicious persons lingering around outside the school property they should report to the Child Protection Officer.
4. All areas of the school need to be kept free of any hazardous items.
5. All playground gates need to be kept closed always.
6. No smoking is permitted on the school grounds.
7. Visitors and maintenance personnel need to sign into the visitors register at reception.
8. Observers doing classroom observations need to be handed the School's Observation Policy before entering the classroom.

11.1 Emergency Plan (applies to both school, aftercare & holiday care staff)

A. **IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY** (unconscious, severe bleeding, broken limb, suspected poisoning, etc) the following procedures should be followed:

1. First Aid trained staff member to stay with injured child;
2. Other person to call for medical help;
3. First Aid to be administered as per training
4. Office to inform parent- speak in a calm and rational manner;
5. Continue First Aid as necessary and wait for ambulance;
6. The school's Accident Report form to be filled in in detail and signed by principal- one copy for the child's file, one copy for the parent;

B. If not an emergency:

1. Directress / assistant to administer First Aid;
2. The school's Accident Report form to be filled in in detail and signed by the principal- one copy for the child's file, one copy for the parent;
3. Appropriate staff member to advise parents when the child is to be fetched from school. The parent/ child minder/guardian signs both forms and keeps one copy;

C. In the event of **SUSPICIOUS PEOPLE** in the area:

- 1) Ensure the children in your care are safe and under supervision. Alert the adult who is monitoring them to the fact that you will be investigating the situation.
- 2) Depending on the situation, move the children inside the building with the other staff member/s.
- 3) Ensure you have the panic button with you.
- 4) Approach the person/ people and enquire courteously about their business.
- 5) If in doubt, or if you feel threatened, alert the armed response with the panic button.
- 6) If you feel the person should not be in the area or cannot justify their intentions, use the radio to alert the neighbourhood watch or armed response emergency services once you are inside the building again.
- 7) If radio not available call 107 on landline or 911 from cell
- 8) Do NOT resist demands (appease suspicious people)

D. In the event of a **FIRE**:

1. Press alarm/panic button
2. Take school's phone or own mobile phone
3. Everyone to take car keys if applicable
4. Directress/ supervisor to have class register
5. The following to be checked:

By who	To check where
Turtles assistant	Their bathroom
Angelfish assistant	Kitchen & storeroom
Penguin assistant	Bathroom
Meerkats	Behind shelves or areas where a child can hide
Dolphins and Seahorse assistant	Prefab bathrooms and storeroom
Secretary	Downstairs office and storeroom

11.2 Interior of school:

1. The classrooms are set out with the children's safety in mind.
2. All equipment/furniture is to be regularly inspected for safety.
3. Any hazardous items/liquids to be kept out of reach of the children, preferably in a locked cupboard
4. Plug sockets are to be blocked.
5. Children may not enter the kitchen unattended.
6. The kitchen is not to be left unattended when any form of cooking is in progress.
7. All knives and other hazardous kitchen equipment is to be kept out of reach of the children or locked away.
8. All staff need to be familiar with the school's fire and emergency evacuation drill. Refer to the fire drill procedure.
9. Fire extinguishers are to be serviced regularly.
10. All staff need to know how to operate a fire extinguisher.

12 General First Aid, Hygiene and HIV / AIDS Policy of Stepping Stones Montessori School Aim:

To inform and educate the parents and staff of Stepping Stones Montessori School about the precautions and process in dealing with the disease.

Definition:

HIV – Human immunodeficiency virus

AIDS – Acquired immune deficiency syndrome, the final phase of HIV infection

Rights of learners and staff:

1. All information disclosed will be confidential and be safeguarded always.
2. No learner may be denied admission to or continued attendance at Stepping Stones Montessori School because of his or her HIV / Aids status.
3. No Staff member can be denied fulfilling his or her duties because of his or her HIV / AIDS status.
4. No learners or staff with HIV / AIDS may be unfairly discriminated against in any way.
5. Learners and staff with HIV / AIDS are treated in a just, humane and life-affirming way.

Notification of HIV/ AIDS status:

1. Parents and staff are advised to share the status of learner or staff with the principal. The principal would use his / her discretion regarding this information and make relevant staff members aware to support and better cater for the needs of the learner or staff member.
2. It is not required for parents or staff members to share their HIV / AIDS status with the school.

Universal Health and safety precautions:

1. All situations are treated with the assumption that it is a potential exposure to HIV, all persons are potentially infected, and all blood be treated as such.
2. All persons attending to blood spills, open wounds, sores, breaks in skin, grazes, open skin lesions, body fluids and excretions should wear protective latex gloves over their hands to eliminate the risk of HIV transmission.
3. Blood is handled with extreme caution.
4. The learners are taught to never touch blood or injuries of peers; they must notify a staff member to assist the injured learner.
5. If able, the injured learner should assist or even clean the wound him / herself.
6. Skin exposed to blood must be washed immediately with antiseptic and running water.
7. All bleeding wounds, sores, breaks in skin, grazes and open skin lesions are cleaned immediately with running water and / or antiseptics and covered with a waterproof dressing.
8. If there is a biting or scratching incident where the skin is broken, the wound must be washed and treated with antiseptic and covered with a waterproof dressing.
9. Blood splashes to the face (mucous membranes of eyes, nose or mouth) must be flushed with running water for at least three minutes.
10. Cleansing should always be done under running water and not in a container of water.
11. Contaminated surfaces must be cleaned with antiseptic household bleach. The cleaner must wear gloves.
12. A First Aid Kit, fully stocked with appropriate gloves, plasters, etc. must be available in each classroom, office, the garden and be available to be taken along for outings.
13. All members of staff must have a valid First Aid certificate and update their training every two years.
14. Additional gloves should be kept in the kitchen area and bathrooms.
15. All physical injuries are to be recorded on the Accident Report form, and all incidents of a physical/ aggressive nature between children need to be recorded on the Incident Report form, a copy of which needs to be handed to the parent, and a copy to be kept with the child's records.
16. All staff dealing with nappy changing or we/ soiled underwear must wear latex gloves always.

Education:*Staff:*

1. Familiarize themselves with the school's policy.
2. Receive instruction from the principal on the general health rules and safety precautions at the school.
3. Attend regular meetings re update of protocol.
4. Have a valid First Aid certificate and regularly renew and update their training.
5. Incorporate the Health and Safety precautions and rules into the areas of learning.

Parents:

1. Read the Stepping Stones Montessori School policy on HIV / AIDS.
2. Principal to make it part of the admission interview.
3. To be kept up to date via media when the educators teach "hygiene", to extend, support and reinforce the subject at home.

13 Communications about children

1. Photographs of children used for websites, school brochures and other promotional material may not be used without written consent of the parent/guardian of the child.
2. Photographs of children should be 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.

14 Partner organisations

Any agreement between the school and partner organizations which provide services to children will require assurance that a child protection policy and procedure is in place and needs to be adhered to.

15

Emergency contact numbers

Cape Town Central police station: Communications officer Captain October: 021 467 8189

Social worker: The Social Worker is Monique Hendricks 021 481 9710