



**Policy
on Child and Youth Care
within the Nehemiah Gateway Group**

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Nehemiah Gateway Group

Policy on Child and Youth Care

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1. Introduction

In children's and youth ministry, the Nehemiah Gateway Group (N.G. Group) is committed to seeking to promote the general welfare, health and full development of every child, recognizing the privilege and responsibility this brings to all those involved in our organizations.

In today's society, child abuse and child abuse accusations occur frequently. This is a sad fact of life. So in our various ministries we cannot be satisfied until we are sure we have done everything in our power to protect them from harm of all kinds, and to protect our workers and volunteer helpers from false accusations, hence the publication of this Child Protection Policy.

We at the N.G. Group realize that this publication is necessary because in these days of social change and shifting moral values, parents entrust their children to us for nurture, safe care and wise leadership. It is imperative that there are guidelines and procedures in place that will provide peace of mind to parents, children and co-workers. This publication does not call into question the integrity of our children's and youth co-workers, teachers, and social workers, etc. It is produced in response to the recommendations of our governments, and to our desire to provide SERVICE WITH CARE.

All co-workers, volunteer leaders and helpers are required to read this policy. It is regrettable that we have to take such steps in these days but we are sure that it is the best and wisest approach for everyone concerned.

The aim of this document is primarily to make reference to the integration of international standards, which are described below, within the N.G. Group. This document attempts to set out clear guidelines and procedures for all co-workers and volunteers. It includes a Code of Behavior that every co-worker and volunteer must follow, not only to protect the child, but also to protect themselves from allegations of abuse.

1.1. United Nations' Convention on the rights of the child

The Convention of the United Nations¹ is "a set of minimum standards – the bottom line – in protecting children's rights". We as the N.G. Group are guided by these standards and committed to maintaining the rights for the protection of children formulated in the Convention. Furthermore, we are committed to creating basic conditions for our work under which the protection of children is promoted and safeguarded.

According to the Convention, children have rights relating to:

¹ See: <http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/participation/CRC-C-GC-12.pdf> (accessed on March 15, 2013)

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- reasonable standards of living;
- protection from violence, abuse, and exploitation;
- protection for those cared for away from home and for those with a disability;
- being able to use their own language, enjoy their own culture, and practice their own religion;
- the protection of the environment in which they live.

The key principles are:

- paramountcy – the welfare of the child must always be the paramount consideration in decisions taken about him or her;
- parental responsibility – parents have responsibilities to their children rather than rights over them;
- prevention – this is about preventing situations arising where children are unnecessarily separated from their families. It is also about the State providing services to keep children safely within their families and to promote their health or welfare;
- partnership – this encourages us to work in partnership with parents and other agencies, as the most effective way of ensuring that a child's needs are met;
- protection – this places a "duty of care" on all who work with children to report child protection concerns to the appropriate agencies.

In the light of this Convention, it is wise for us as a community of values to be seen to be doing everything we can to ensure the protection of the children with whom we come into contact. In so doing, we give parents confidence in our ministries, services and work, knowing that, if it is at all possible, their children will be protected from harm while in our care.

1.2. Definitions

- Child/youth – any person under the age of 18 years old
- Employee – someone working with the N.G. Group in a full-time capacity, part-time or on an hourly basis
- Volunteer – unpaid helper in various activities
- Co-workers – employees and volunteers
- Event – any of the ministries, services and work within the N.G. Group. This may be any regular form of activities or any other activity organized, conducted and/or supervised by an N.G. Group project.

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2. Child Protection Policy Statement

The N.G. Group believes that all children and young people should enjoy N.G. Group projects, facilities and activities without fear of harm. The N.G. Group, with the assistance of all co-workers and volunteer staff, will take every appropriate step to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and young people with whom we work, regardless of class, race or creed.

We will endeavor to safeguard children by:

- adopting child protection guidelines through a code of behavior for staff and volunteers;
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff, and volunteers;
- sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately;
- following carefully the procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers;
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, and training.

We are also committed to reviewing our policy and good practice at regular intervals.

3. Code of Behavior

3.1. General principles

In all N.G. Group activities, co-workers should give children appropriate time to express their opinions. All children should be valued and respected as individuals, and workers should be available to listen to the children whenever necessary. Co-workers are encouraged to praise children for good behavior and show consistency in their approach to each child. Co-workers should encourage the children to participate in all the activities that are available, and their achievements should be recognized. Furthermore the co-workers' contact with the children should reflect all the values of the N.G. Group.

3.2. Guidelines for the protection of children and co-workers/volunteers

The following behavior is **NOT** recommended:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Taking children alone in a car on journeys, however short. Where this is unavoidable, it should be with the full knowledge and consent of the parents, and someone in charge of the event.
- Contacting children via cell phones or the Internet without parental consent.
- Co-workers should not normally make their cell phone numbers or email addresses available to the children.

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We should **NEVER**...

- engage in sexually provocative or rough physical games, including fooling about – with the exception of structured sports activities;
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form;
- make unnecessary physical contact with children;
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
- make sexually suggestive comments about, or to, a child – even in fun;
- let allegations made by a child go without being addressed and recorded;
- do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves.

3.3. Physical contact with children

Physical contact should only ever take place with the consent of the child.

- Be mindful of how and where you touch a child – the child must feel comfortable with the contact.
- There may be contact during sports or games, but remember your size and strength, and so restrict your involvement for the safety of the children.
- Physical contact of a comforting and reassuring nature is a valid way of expressing your concern and care. However, it is only appropriate if it is meeting the need of the child.

3.4. Meeting with individual children for counseling/guidance

- Meeting with individual children should take place as openly as possible.
- If privacy is needed, the door should be left open and other team members informed of the meeting.
- If counseling/guidance is taking place within the context of an N.G. Group event or during the course of normal activities, the responsible co-worker should:
 - gain consent from, and confirm all details with, the appropriate superior leaders;
 - agree on the venue, date and time of the appointment with the parents;
 - where possible ensure there is someone else on the premises for the duration of the counseling/guidance session.
 - This information is to be recorded in writing before and after the meeting and signed by all those involved (parents sign for their children) and stored in the appropriate files of the superior leader.

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3.5. Contact with children outside of N.G. Group events/facilities

- Children can visit friends at the homes of co-workers with the consent of both sets of parents.
- Informal contact with children / young people must only be with the full knowledge and consent of the parents and superior leaders. It is the responsibility of the adults concerned to agree on a date, time and venue, to inform parents and gain their consent in writing.
- All other contact / informal meetings with children within the homes of co-workers should be discouraged at all times. If such meetings nevertheless take place, N.G. Group does not take any responsibility.

3.6. Personal relationships

In their mutual personal relationships with one another or older members of the N.G. Group, co-workers should ensure that these relationships do not affect their role within their ministry or work or put children in a potentially harmful situation.

3.7. Supervision at N.G. Group venues

- Children should never be left unsupervised while in the care of N.G. Group co-workers.
- Leaders in charge must be confident that those co-workers and adults who accompany group parties are fully competent to do so.
- Children will always be safer when supervised by two or more adults.
- When only two adults are present in the room with children, as far as possible they should be one male and one female;
- Any activity using potentially dangerous equipment should have constant adult supervision.
- Dangerous behavior by children should not be allowed.
- In a "meeting" situation, a minimum ratio of 1 adult to 8 children should be aimed at, and on outings this ratio should be increased to a minimum of 1 adult to 5 children.
- The standard recommended ratios are:
 - 0-2 years 1 member of staff to 3 children
 - 2-3 years 1 member of staff to 4 children
 - 3-7 years 1 member of staff to 8 children
 - 8 and over 2 members of staff (preferably one of each gender) for up to 20 children
 - There should be one additional staff member for every 10 extra children and/or young people.
 - Exceptions to this standard recommended ratio are classroom and school situations that are handled according to the School Regulations.
- Co-workers should know at all times where children are and what they are doing.

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3.8. Supervision of children on journeys/outings/trips

- The organizers of journeys/visits should plan and prepare a detailed program of activities for the children who are involved in the project.
- Organizers are responsible for the welfare and safety of the children for the whole time they are away from home.
- Young people should not be left to their own devices, for example, in a town for the evening or on shopping expeditions. However, parental consent may be sought for older teens to have less direct supervision as long as they stay in groups.
- All children should be adequately supervised and engaged in suitable activities at all times.
- In circumstances where planned activities are disrupted, e.g. due to weather conditions, organizers should have a number of alternative activities planned. Parents must be informed about these alternative activities.
- Organizers should obtain, in writing, parental consent for children joining an organized trip. If, within the context of the above-mentioned activities, there are changes to the program caused by external factors, the parents' permission must be obtained in advance for the alternative activities. The alternative activities may not be carried out until permission has been obtained from the parents.
- Parents should be given full information about a trip, including details of the program of events, the activities in which the children will be engaged and the supervision ratios.

3.9. Legal guardianship

The following defines what is meant by legal guardianship within the meaning of this document:

- The natural mother always has parental responsibility (except where an adoption order has been made).
- The natural father also has parental responsibility if he was married to the mother before the birth of the child, if he subsequently marries the mother, or if the parents jointly registered the birth of the child (acknowledgment of paternity).
- Other members of the family may have parental responsibility if it has been granted by the courts or can be otherwise proven.
- Failure by any co-workers to adhere to this code of behavior may result in disciplinary measures being taken.

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4. Sharing information

4.1. ... with children and young people

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have a right to information, especially any information that would make life better and safer for them. At all N.G. Group events, children / young people should be informed:

- of the rules and regulations of the event they are attending, and of our expectations of them, including how they behave towards other individuals,
- of the fire safety procedures of the venue at which the event is held,
- about the facilities that are available for their use at the venue, e.g. toilets, snack bars, kiosks,
- and about how, and with whom, they can share their concerns, complaints, and anxieties.
- This information is usually provided by the person in charge two weeks before the commencement of the event. The information should be handed out to the parents in writing and returned to the co-workers responsible after being signed by the parents.

4.2. ... with parents

Parents are responsible for their children's welfare at all times, and they should be assured that their children are involved with a credible and caring organization.

They should be informed about the nature of the relationships with the adults with whom their children form friendships.

To support this, N.G. Group co-workers should follow these steps:

- publicize information about our events, e.g. visit homes, hold a parents' information evening, and distribute flyers,
- make parents aware of our Child Protection Policy,
- make them aware of whom they should contact if they have concerns or complaints,
- inform them of the Code of Behavior for co-workers and volunteers involved in the ministry and work of our community.

4.3. ... with co-workers and volunteers

Good information will enable co-workers and volunteers to know how to handle emergencies and child protection issues. It will also enable them to pass on concerns to the appropriate person within our community.

For this reason, all our co-workers undergo training in the child protection policy and procedures of the N.G. Group. Such training is offered at regular intervals and/or as needed.

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4.4. Manner of sharing information

When sharing information, we take into consideration the level of understanding, maturity, and responsibility, and the background of the people with whom we are communicating. For example, providing information about policy and procedures to children will be done in a manner appropriate to their age. Communication with the target group is carried out both verbally and in written form.

5. Closing remarks

This policy on dealing with and protecting children and young people is effective as soon as it is published in the manual and on the website. We are happy to provide detailed information about the internal procedures and training related to "child protection" on request.

6. Contacts

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