

## **CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

Network for Early Childhood Development of Lesotho (NECDoL) is a non-profit voluntary association of individuals, organizations and institutions who have come together to pursue the same objectives aimed at the overall well-being of young children.

The network's Vision is that by 2030, every child in Lesotho from 0 to 5 years old shall have equitable access to well-coordinated quality integrated early childhood services.

Our Mission is that the Network will ensure coordination of partners, stakeholders, programs and initiatives aimed at the holistic development of children from 0 to 5 years old at national level through research, informed advocacy, resource mobilization, capacity building, partnerships, innovation, monitoring and evaluation of ECD (Early Childhood Development) services and programs to improve the well-being of children in their early years of life.

#### **The Objectives of NECDoL are therefore to:**

- a. Coordinate information sharing, linkages and referrals among partners and stakeholders for improved wellbeing of children aged 0-5years.
- b. Advocate for policies, laws, regulations and framework that improve service delivery for the wellbeing of 0-5 year old children.
- c. Conduct research in ECD (Early Childhood Development) and document lessons learnt to inform ECE (Early Childhood Education) interventions.
- d. Mobilize resources for sustainable ECD programming.
- e. Improve the visibility of the network and learn from other networks through membership in the African ECD Network.

The organization operates according to the United Nations and Laws of Lesotho

### **2. Definitions of abuse**



By definition child abuse is harm to a child which occurs immediately or through accumulated affects over a period of time. The following forms of abuse are noted:

Physical abuse: when adults/peers deliberately inflict bodily harm, physical pain and or injuries on a child/youth or, knowingly, do not prevent them from being physically abused. This includes hitting, shaking, squeezing, biting or burning.

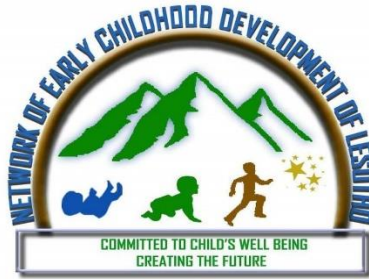
Sexual abuse: is any sexual activity between a child/youth and an adult or between children/youths where there is an unequal distribution of power such as when one/the perpetrator is significantly older or larger than the other/victim. Sexual Abuse also includes involving or exposing a child to any sexual activity, with or without the usage of modern technology such as the internet, or mobile phones, to any situation where the child is used for the sexual stimulation and gratification of the perpetrator and/or exposing the child/youth to pornographic material.

Emotional abuse: is when adults taking care of children and youths continuously fail to show the child/youth respect, care and appropriate love and affection. It also includes threatening, taunting and shouting at children/youth. Peer victimisation/bullying also represents emotional abuse. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose children to emotional abuse. These actions or failure to act must be intentional. That is, a parent/guardian/caregiver/adult/young person must willfully neglect a child.

Verbal abuse: Verbal abuse includes excessive shouting or swearing at, or in front of, children/youths. It also includes threats, teasing, insults, racial taunts and any demeaning comments about the child/youth.

Neglect and negligent treatment: this occurs when care-giving adults fail to meet the child's/youth's essential needs and withhold life necessities from a child/youth, for example food, warmth, education and medical care. However, we need to be clear and define that if care-giving adults are not financially/economically in the position to provide such necessities as food, clothing, education and medical care, this can be seen as the effects of poverty and not neglect. Leaving children/youths that are too young to look after themselves alone or without proper supervision can also be construed as neglect.

Commercial exploitation: is exploiting a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labour.



### **3. Objectives of the policy**

- i. Demonstrate NECDOL's commitment to safeguard children from harm.
- ii. Identify responsibilities of NECDOL in this regard
- iii. Provide guidelines to follow in the event of an accusation or suspicion of abuse

### **4. Code of Conduct regarding contact with children**

When in the physical presence of a child or children within the context of NECDOL, it is the responsibility of all board, staff and volunteers to:

- Be professional and maintain a high standard of personal behaviour at all times
- Recognise the trust placed in adults by children and young people and recognise the power held over children by adults. Treat this trust of power with the highest responsibility.
- Try to work in an open and accountable manner at all times. Working in view of others whenever possible. Be wary of working alone and unobserved.
- Be willing to accept questions or criticism regarding good practice.
- Expect others to work in an open and accountable way, question and criticise the practice of others if necessary.
- Maintain a professional relationship with children. Any form of sexual relationship or activity with a child is unacceptable and is likely to lead to disciplinary or legal action.
- Not be under the influence of drink, drugs or illegal substances when working with children or young people.
- Use appropriate and respectful forms of discipline. Physical aggression, intimidation, verbal abuse and persistent shouting are not acceptable. Any form of assault (e.g. hitting, kicking, pinching, slapping) should be regarded as a serious incident.
- Do not use their own 'personal' electronic communications (e.g. mobile phones, social networking sites) for contacting young people, unless there is an organisational agreement to do so.
- Use appropriate language at all times do not swear and never make sexual or suggestive comments to a child. If a child makes such comments be ready to enforce these boundaries in your response.



- Do not appear to favour one child or show interest in one child more than another.
- Do not discriminate against a child because of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin or sexual identity.
- Use physical contact with children or young people only where necessary. If contact is necessary (e.g. for the purpose of coaching or first aid). Explain to the child what the contact is for and change your approach if he/she appears uncomfortable.
- Be aware of situations that can be misunderstood or manipulated by other adults (e.g. if an adult is alone with a child in a room or a car, he or she may be vulnerable to allegations of misconduct).
- Always be vigilant and aware of how actions can be misinterpreted by children. Actions made with good intentions can seem intrusive and intimidating to some children. Sometimes children become attracted to the adults working with them. Adults should be aware of the impact of their action and should sensitively address any misunderstanding

## **5. Procedures for reporting suspected or actual abuse of children**

Should a board member, employee or volunteer observe or receive any information about actual or suspected abuse within the context of NECDOL activities he/she must immediately report this to the appropriate Programme Manager and the National Coordinator.

Their first responsibility is to secure the safety of the child and therefore report any concerns within the area of child protection (physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect or bullying) in confidence and without delay. If the right people cannot be contacted and there appears to be an immediate risk contact the Police or your local Children's Services.

In order that a high standard of reporting and responding is met, board members, employees and volunteers of NECDOL undertake to:

- Take seriously any concerns raised with the following laws. The Sexual Offense act 2003, Anti Trafficking act 2010, Education Act 2010. Failure to do so can lead to prosecution of the person failing to report.
- Take positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subject of any 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”
- Work in partnership with parents/careers and/or other professionals to ensure the protection of children.

**Reporting:** All verbal reports must be followed up with written notification within 24 hours. Reports are confidential.

You should provide as much objective information as possible, including: place, date, time, form of communication of disclosure or observation of event

- Names of people/organisations/community members involved
- Details of alleged incident/s
- Activities/interventions already undertaken, specifying if none taken at time of report
- Support provided and/or services engaged (especially if medical),
- Details of proposed actions
- Any other relevant information.

## **6. Staff recruitment**

The NECDOL is committed to the following recruitment practises for any staff member, including volunteers and consultants, who will have contact, however frequent, with children in the course of their work:

- Make a statement in job advertisements that state our policy with regard to the protection of children
- Ensure a minimum of two verbal referee checks are conducted as part of the recruitment of all staff and volunteers engaged at NECDOL
- Ask at least one question during the recruitment interview that presents a hypothetical scenario relating to child protection
- Require all staff and volunteers sign the acknowledgement that they have read and understood the Child Protection Policy, and will abide by the Code of Conduct for Working with Children.



## **7. Training**

The NECDOL will regularly update its staff regarding all policies including the child protection policy.

The child protection policy will be included in the induction programme for all new staff.

## **8. Confidentiality**

The issue of confidentiality is of the utmost importance when dealing with issues and concerns regarding possible abuse. NECDOL board members, employees 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.

## **9. PSEA Policy**

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) violates universally recognized legal norms and standards, and are unacceptable behaviors and prohibited conduct for all humanitarian work force including NECDOL employees and related personnel.

NECDOL has a zero tolerance policy towards SEA. All NECDOL employees and related personnel are expected to uphold the highest standards of personal and professional conduct at all times, and to provide humanitarian assistance and service in a manner that respects and fosters the rights of beneficiaries and other vulnerable members of the local community.

**I have read and understand this Policy. I understand that any inappropriate behavior as per this policy will result in disciplinary and/or legal actions against me.**

**Name and Surname:** .....

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....