



NOVA PIONEER
SCHOOLS FOR INNOVATORS & LEADERS

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

SOUTH AFRICA

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1 Introduction

Nova Pioneer aspires to build secure and safe communities through the recognition and realisation of community safety as a common good. Nova Pioneer's focus is on crime prevention, especially for groups or individuals identified as being most vulnerable to victimisation.

- 1.1 Nova Pioneer does this by:
 - 1.1.1 Conducting rigorous research into issues of relevance to policy-makers, public officials, development partners and crime prevention practitioners.
 - 1.1.2 Facilitating the implementation of crime prevention projects.
 - 1.1.3 Providing accredited sector-specific training in crime prevention.

- 1.2 This policy is informed and guided by the following:
 - 1.2.1 Child Justice Act, 75 of 2008
 - 1.2.2 Children's Act, No 38 of 2005
 - 1.2.3 Child Care Amendment Act (Act 96 of 1996)
 - 1.2.4 The South African Constitution
 - 1.2.5 Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act of 2007

2 Nature And Purpose Of This Policy

- 2.1 Nova Pioneer also provides direct services in the form of early crime prevention programmes and interventions. This necessarily entails working with children on issues related child safety.
- 2.2 We recognise the importance of protecting children and for this reason all staff are trained to ensure that any engagement with children is governed by strict ethical principles that ensure that no harm comes to those who participate in our programmes, and also protect the employees and contractors from false accusations.

3 Definitions

- 3.1 Staff: all employees, full and part-time, and programme volunteers that have any contact with child or access to facilities
- 3.2 Contractors: all individuals working for Nova Pioneer on contract or in terms of a Memorandum of Understanding.
- 3.3 Child: all individuals under the age of 18 years.

4 Principles And Guidelines For Child Protection

- 4.1 No programme interventions will be conducted unless the consent has been obtained from the parent/legal guardian as well as a signed assent from the child (if old enough to do so).
- 4.2 No photographs or images will be captured unless the consent has been obtained from the parent/legal guardian as well as a signed assent from the child (if old enough to do so).
- 4.3 Only parents and legal guardians can provide consent and children can only provide assent.
- 4.4 The identity of all children to remain anonymous, unless express permission to reveal the identity has been given by the parent..
- 4.5 Treat all children with respect regardless of differences of religion, age, culture, gender, ability and economic conditions.
- 4.6 Allow children to have a say in decisions that affect them and listen earnestly to their concerns.
- 4.7 Engage in appropriate behaviour and use language that is not intended to shame or humiliate children in any way.
- 4.8 Take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are safe and comfortable to answer questions when being interviewed and when participating in programmes and interventions.
- 4.9 No child should ever be placed at risk of harm in any way.
- 4.10 All spaces where children interact with adults need to offer visibility for the mutual protection of child and adult, ensuring confidentiality where necessary..

5 Recruitment and Selection

- 5.1 Nova Pioneer follows stringent recruitment processes to ensure that all staff who are recruited understands and commits to the Nova Pioneer Policies and Procedures.
- 5.2 Reference checks are done on all potential employees.
- 5.3 Before commencing employment all staff are required to read and acknowledge understanding of all Nova Pioneer policies, procedures and guidelines.

- 5.4 All Nova Pioneer staff will be screened in accordance with this policy. All Nova Pioneer staff and volunteers who work directly with children will be screened against both the National Child Protection Register AND the Sexual Offences Register.
- 5.5 Written Application
 - 5.5.1 All potential staff must complete and sign a written application form that will request basic information from the applicant.
 - 5.5.2 Applicants are required to complete a questionnaire on JAZZ
 - 5.5.3 ICAS checks are also carried out on all new employees.
- 5.6 Personal Interview
 - 5.6.1 A personal interview will be conducted with the applicant by management staff to discuss the position and the applicant's talents, qualifications and abilities.
 - 5.6.2 Multiple and/or group interviews may be conducted as appropriate.
- 5.7 Reference Checks
 - 5.7.1 All applicants must provide at least three (3) references.
 - 5.7.2 References may be personal or professional and be presented in written form or by providing phone contact information.
 - 5.7.3 All references will be confirmed by Talent staff and documented in the applicant's personnel file.
- 5.8 Criminal Background Check
 - 5.8.1 Criminal background checks will be conducted for all potential staff before an employment offer is extended.
 - 5.8.2 Background checks will comply with applicable regulations and governing programmes.
 - 5.8.3 Applicants will not be considered for positions when checks show evidence of convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to the mission of Nova Pioneer.
 - 5.8.4 Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form may also terminate an individual's application.

6 Training And Education

- 6.1 All staff will receive an orientation that includes:

- 6.1.1 Review and receipt of the Nova Pioneer Employee Code of Conduct - an original signed copy will be kept in the individual's personnel file
 - 6.1.2 Review of policies related to safety, transportation, prevention and reporting of child abuse and emergency procedures - within the first week of their activation
 - 6.1.3 Training in recognising signs of suspected child abuse
 - 6.1.4 Training in the prevention of "Bullying"
 - 6.1.5 Managers will be trained on hiring and screening potential staff members.
- 6.2 The Nova Pioneer Policy Committee will review this policy as part of their initial orientation
 - 6.3 Staff training and orientations will be updated and refreshed each year
 - 6.4 Documentation of all training will be maintained by the organisation.
 - 6.5 Nova Pioneer may from time to time offer educational information and resources for the community, parents and child through workshops, programmes, and the use of printed and/or audio-visual resources.
 - 6.6 Staff are also equipped with the necessary containment skills to be able to respond appropriately when situations arise in the classroom or on the sportsfield or playground..

7 Reporting

- 7.1 Mechanisms for anonymous reporting at age-appropriate level will be available on all campuses.
- 7.2 All Nova Pioneer campuses must regularly inform all children about the following:
 - 7.2.1 The importance of reporting abuse or neglect to a responsible adult
 - 7.2.2 The process to follow when making a report of abuse or neglect to Nova Pioneer staff
 - 7.2.3 What children can do if they report abuse or neglect to a Nova Pioneer staff member and no action is taken.
- 7.3 All Nova Pioneer campuses and programme venues must display a list of emergency contact numbers for children to use if they need to report abuse or neglect.

- 7.4 For purposes of this policy, “abuse”, in relation to a child, means any form of harm or ill-treatment deliberately inflicted on a child, and includes:
- 7.4.1 Assaulting a child or inflicting any other form of deliberate injury to a child
 - 7.4.2 Sexually abusing a child or allowing a child to be sexually abused
 - 7.4.3 Bullying by another child
 - 7.4.4 A labour practice that exploits a child
 - 7.4.5 Exposing or subjecting a child to behaviour that may harm the child psychologically or emotionally
- 7.6 Any irresponsible and unprofessional behaviour must be reported within 24 hours to the School Leader or designated person. “Irresponsible and unprofessional behaviour” is defined as follows:
- 7.6.1 Any conduct or speech that might potentially cause emotional, physical or psychological harm to a child and in doing so, violates any rights the child may have in terms of the South African constitution, the Children’s Act and the Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act.
 - 7.6.2 Any conduct or speech that breaches the appropriate professional organisation’s Code of Conduct.
- 7.7 If a staff member has reason to believe that a child is a danger to themselves (cutting, suicide, self harm thoughts) it is also critical that this is reported as in 7.6 above.
- 7.8 It is important to understand that clauses 7.6 and 7.7 above are mandatory. Staff members are legally obliged to submit such reports. Failure to do so could result in personal liability.
- 7.9 The safety of children is always our priority. Therefore strict action is taken when concerns, whether witnessed or suspected, in breach of the Child Protection Policy, is reported.
- 7.10 The process below must be followed by all internal Nova Pioneer staff.

STEP 1:

1. Staff will report known or suspected child abuse immediately or as soon as practically possible, taking note of the following:
 - a. Child’s name, address and telephone number.
 - b. Parents or guardians name and telephone numbers.
 - c. Reasons for concern and any relevant statements made by the child.

2. If an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at or during any programmes or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:
 - a. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
 - b. The appropriate authorities will be notified, consistent with applicable legislation.
 - c. The alleged perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct or any action that puts students at serious or ongoing risk (e.g. harassment, hitting, verbal abuse) will immediately be suspended pending an investigation.
3. Staff will follow an internal chain of command for the reporting of abuse, making all reports to the relevant line manager
4. Staff must report directly to the School Leader or Managing Director, if their supervisor does not handle any report immediately.

STEP 2:

1. Inform the designated Nova Pioneer personnel in writing of the incident within 24 hours of the incident coming to light.
2. Nova Pioneer's Managing Director and Managers are responsible for assessing the validity of the complaints within 72 hours.

STEP 3:

1. The designated personnel should contact a Social Worker from a Child protection organization such as a Child Welfare Society or the Department of Social Development, or the Child Protection Officer of the South African Police Services.
2. The following should be noted:
 - a. The name of the person making the call;
 - b. The name of the intake worker receiving the call;
 - c. The date and time of the call; and
 - d. The action proposed by the person to whom the abuse has been reported.

STEP 4:

1. The social worker (and the police in some cases) will interview the child as soon as possible.
2. All staff must cooperate with this process, as and where requested by the relevant authorities.
3. If response up is slow and particularly if the child remains at risk, the referring person should follow up until the child is safe.

STEP 5:

1. Once the official investigation has been completed, Nova Pioneer may pursue internal disciplinary proceedings, as and when necessary.
2. A detailed report must be submitted of findings pertaining to any investigations.
3. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, a management team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident.
4. The team should act only in consultation with an attorney
5. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with Nova Pioneer.

External contractors will report any suspected child abuse or neglect to their Nova Pioneer line manager. Thereafter, the same process as outlined above will be followed.

8 Information And Communication Technology

The Nova Pioneer Information Technology Policy and Social Media Policy refer. All technology use (either with school-based or personal devices) must be in compliance with the above policies.

9 Supervision

- 9.1 Supervision of children, programmes, facilities and staff will be designed to protect children and staff at all times.
- 9.2 Management staff may make unannounced visits to all education activities..
- 9.3 A minimum of two staff should be assigned to each programme and operating site.
- 9.4 Staff members will never be alone with an individual child where they are not observable by others.
- 9.5 Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room. All storage, maintenance and utility area doors will be secured when not in use.
- 9.6 All campuses and activity venues will have access to a telephone or cellphone on location during operating hours.
- 9.7 Children will never be left unsupervised; including in bathrooms, locker rooms, or showers.
 - 9.7.1 Written restroom use practices will be in place.

- 9.7.2 Facilities will be well lighted indoors and out.
- 9.7.3 Guests, service and contractors will sign-in to all facilities.
- 9.7.4 Staff will never release children to anyone other than the authorised parent(s), guardian(s), or an individual authorised by parents in writing or verified by phone.

- 9.8 Sign-in and sign-out will be in place for all programmes.
- 9.9 Staff will check for signs of physical injury or emotional abnormality each time a child reports to class.
- 9.10 Staff will utilise constructive methods for maintaining group control and managing child behaviour.
- 9.11 Staff will not disrobe a child other than outer garments without the presence of another staff member.
- 9.12 Staff will avoid changing clothes in front of child.
- 9.13 All staff will fulfil a probationary period of three months until all training and orientation is completed.

10 Contact With Child

- 10.1 It is understood that caring quality staff will develop positive relationships with children while involved in Nova Pioneer programmes.
- 10.2 Staff will not initiate contact with or accept supervisory responsibility for children outside of Nova Pioneer programmes and activities, including baby-sitting or private instructions.
- 10.3 Staff will not communicate with children outside of Nova Pioneer programmes via written, electronic or other means without express management approval.
- 10.4 Staff will appear and behave in a manner consistent with the mission and values of Nova Pioneer at all times while on or off duty; including electronic, written and verbal communications.

11 Communications

- 11.1 Nova Pioneer will promote positive values and child protection strategies in its programmes, facilities, with parents and in the community.

- 11.2 Parents will receive regular written information about the programmes content and schedules; feedback regarding their child's participation in programme including behaviour and general health; and an introduction to the programme staff.
- 11.3 Parents will be allowed to observe programmes at any time as appropriate
- 11.4 Parents and the community will be made aware of Nova Pioneer child protection efforts through regular written and/or electronic communication including: the staff code of conduct, abuse prevention training for staff and child, how to report suspicious behaviour and that staff is not allowed to contact child outside of programmes.
- 11.5 Nova Pioneer will designate a spokesperson to the media and community in the event of any incident concerning abuse or neglect.

12 Dissemination of the policy

- 12.1 Nova Pioneer is committed to ensuring that all relevant parties are informed about its policy and understand the importance of keeping children safe.
- 12.2 Nova Pioneer's Child Protection Policy is:
 - 12.2.1 Circulated and discussed with all current and future employees, contractors and consultants.
 - 12.2.2 Circulated and discussed with all current and future board members.
 - 12.3.3 Circulated and discussed with the communities with whom Nova Pioneer collaborates.

13 Review

In order to remain relevant, this policy will be reviewed in terms of the Policy Management Policy.