

EDFAM SCHOOLS

MINOR PROTECTION POLICY

POLICY STATEMENTS

In conformity with the laws of Trinidad and Tobago¹ for the protection of children, EDFAM has established the following policy:

1. To operate with fidelity to our Christian principles.
2. The aim is to establish and maintain an environment which manifests awareness of and respect for the rights and needs of children, which avoids any risk of exploitation, sexual abuse, and mistreatment; and, to ensure adequate training for those representatives of the schools responsible for the protection of children whilst in their custody.
3. To prevent and/or mitigate all forms of violence or abuse including but not limited to, physical, emotional, or psychological abuse, neglect, mistreatment, exploitation, or negligence.
4. To raise awareness of the obligation to make abuses known to the competent authorities and to cooperate with these authorities in activities that are directed to preventing and combatting abuses.
5. To respond effectively and in accord with legal requirements to any abuse or mistreatment against children.
6. To offer the victims and their families the opportune support/advice (spiritual, medical, psychological, and legal) where practicable.
7. To ensure that all staff (inclusive of Chaplains and Mentors) at the schools are aware of their shared responsibilities to children consistent with this policy.
8. To ensure that all providers of Extra-curricular activities, both regular and adhoc, are aware of their shared responsibilities to children consistent with this policy
9. To appoint Designated Officers for the protection of children.
10. Incidents of "Child on Child Abuse" will be treated with primarily under our Disciplinary policy, with the exception of allegations of sexual abuse.

A. General principles of action:

- To grant those who claim to be victims as well as their families the right to be welcomed, listened to, and supported (with spiritual, psychological, medical and therapeutical help) so far as is possible, and as well as to provide them adequate channels for presenting their allegations.
- To guarantee to all those involved a procedure that follows due process of law, respects the presumption of innocence and respects as well the principles of legality and proportionate penalties.
- To communicate to all those involved, the legal process required to be followed.
- To remove (suspend or terminate) any person who has been found guilty of abusing a child from the schools.
- To appropriately address incidents involving two or more children with due regard to the rights of all children involved and as a first step to contact the parents of the relevant children.
- To take all practical steps to restore the reputation of those who have been unjustly accused.
- To respect and protect the image, privacy and confidentiality of the persons involved.
- To attempt to preserve the alleged victim and family from any sort of intimidation and retaliation.

¹ See Additional Resources at the end of this document for links to the laws and guidelines.

B. Prevention of abuses

The Schools shall:

- Appoint Designated Officers ("**DO**") for the purpose of assisting the schools in receiving and addressing allegations of abuse (in relation to children) from the alleged victim or third parties. The DO shall have the following responsibilities consistent with the general principles of action and overall policy above:
 - o Gather all information as is necessary or prudent from any and all relevant sources for the purpose of identifying the facts, the accused, the possible victims and any other person involved.
 - o Creating an atmosphere of respect and appropriate relationships within our school community:
 - Be prudent and respectful in dealings with children.
 - Remain in view of other people whenever they are with children.
 - Be prudent in communicating with children including by telephone and through social media
 - Avoid all improper physical or verbal contact, including any that can give rise to ambiguities (caresses, kisses, or hugs that are imprudent, unjustified, or could be interpreted badly).
 - o Exercise good judgment in the dealings among the persons involved in the work of the schools.
 - o Serve as positive role models for the children.
 - o Inform those who are in charge of the school, of any behaviour they see that could be potentially dangerous.
 - o Respect the area of the child's confidentiality.
 - o Inform parents or guardians of special activities that are planned and how they will be carried out.
 - o Carry out activities in rooms (spaces) suitable for the children's age and stage of development, especially ensuring, to the extent possible, that children do not enter or remain in areas that are hidden from view or unsupervised.
 - o Undergo training every two years in order to understand the assessment process for providing early help and intervention and have a working knowledge of how the relevant local authorities conducts a child protection case.
 - o Ensure that each member of staff (inclusive of Chaplains and Mentors) of the schools receives annual training on this policy, is aware of their responsibilities and understands that part of their role is to be alert to possible instances of abuse, that such suspicions should be reported to the DO only and that such persons have access to and understand EDFAM's policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff and volunteers.
 - o Ensure that every provider of Extra-curricular activities to any of our schools receives annual training on this policy, is aware of their responsibilities and understands that part of their role is to be alert to possible instances of abuse, that such suspicions should be reported to the DO only and that such persons have access to and understand EDFAM's policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff and volunteers
 - o Provide Age Appropriate training to students on their rights to safeguarding and protection at our schools.

C. Special prohibitions for the personnel of the schools

The staff (inclusive of Chaplains and Mentors) and all providers of Extra-curricular activities shall prohibit:

- The establishment of any preferential relationship, favoritism, or arbitrariness with any of the children at the schools.
- The transportation of any child without at the least, the company of another child or without the written authorization of their parents or guardian.
- The photographing or filming (or publishing on the internet or social media) of any child without the written authorization of their parents or guardian.
- Any inappropriate conduct or bullying that might occur between children.

Such incidents should be dealt with quickly, calmly, prudently, with due sensitivity, and immediately reported to the DO. The DO should inform the parents or guardians of the persons involved.

PROCEDURES

1 Receiving allegations

Any member of staff receiving reports or evidence or accusation of abuse or any behaviour likely to cause injury or suffering in any way to a child will relay the information to the DO as soon as possible (within 24 hours). In the event that neither DO is unavailable, the member of staff shall report the disclosure to their school Principal, provided that the disclosure does not implicate the Principal, in which case the report should be made to the Head of Schools.

The report will be promptly documented and investigated by the DO with the collaboration of others and reported to the relevant families as deemed fit.

2 Investigating accusations

Careful and thorough investigation of the facts will be conducted with the alleged victim, with the alleged perpetrator and other possible persons implicated, with due respect for the privacy, confidentiality, and reputation of all concerned. Any person involved may be suspended or denied access to school premises during the investigation. Parents of the children concerned will be notified immediately.

The DO shall keep full and complete records of proceedings in relation to all investigations of abuse or inappropriate behaviour and liaise with the School's Principal to keep him or her abreast of all relevant issues.

If the DO is the alleged perpetrator, the Main Advisor will take charge of the investigation.

3 Processing of accusations

In investigating and processing accusations, the DO, advisors and parents shall determine what actions (if any) shall be taken.

However, the processing of accusations which amount to a crime, or accusations which upon investigation suggest that there are reasonable grounds for believing that an offence has been committed, will follow what is established by the Children Act, 2012 namely, notification by the person who became aware of the alleged crime to the nearest branch of the TTPS. The DO shall upon completion of their investigation also report to the police. (In such a case the Children Authority of Trinidad and Tobago may also be notified by the police at their sole discretion).

In other cases which do not constitute a crime or offence, or cases which upon investigation suggest that there are no reasonable grounds for believing that a sexual offence has been committed, the school, after discussion with the parents or guardians and such other persons as deemed prudent, shall decide whether any further action will be taken. If upon investigation the accusation is shown to be false, the accuser will be sanctioned and may be expelled from the school.

The relevant families will be contacted in all circumstances.

4 Changes to these Procedures

The authority for making changes to this policy document resides with the Board of Directors.

The Head-of-Schools in conjunction with the Main Advisor, Designated Officers and the school Principals, shall conduct an annual review of this policy, its procedures and year the practical application of same during the school make recommendations for changes to the document by 31st July of each Calendar year.

KEY PERSONNEL

Designated Officers

Gerard Pounder (Male advocate) - pounderji@hotmail.com / 351-3375,

Clare Ann Fransen (Female advocate) - clareannfransen@gmail.com / 296-5540

Advisors:

The schools may consult the following persons (and such others as deemed fit) in addressing accusations:

- Main Advisor: Kabron Henry. Procurement Advisor/ kabronhenry@gmail.com / 496-1060
- Legal Advisor: Leonard Birmingham, Lawyer/ leonardbgham@gmail.com / 460-6657
- Medical Advisor. Ryan Corbin, Medical doctor / ryanelliotcorbin@gmail.com / 494-0227
- Psychological Advisor: To be determined by fit to the incident and timely availability from among the following
 - Isolde Ali-Ghent; Marina Torres; Kim-Marie Rostant; Ariella Mendez; Allison Hamel-Smith; Sian MacLean
- Spiritual Advisors:
 - Glencoe: Fr Mark Georges
 - Maraval: Fr Albert Aguirre

GLOSSARY:

Our Policy uses the terms defined in the T&T Children Act, 2012. Where the act is silent on an important term, or where this policy uses the vernacular interchangeably with the formal definition of a given term under the Children Act, 2012, this Glossary will provide the definitions to be used by all EDFAM Staff and Stakeholders.

TERM	Definition
ABUSE	<p>4. (1) Where a person has responsibility for a child and—</p> <p>(a) the person wilfully assaults, ill-treats, neglects, abandons or exposes the child or causes or procures the child to be assaulted, ill-treated, neglected, abandoned, or exposed in a manner likely to cause that child suffering or injury to his physical, mental or emotional health; or</p> <p>the person commits the offence of cruelty to a child.</p>
CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE	Any form of physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological abuse inflicted by a child or young person (under the age of 18) on another child. This type of abuse can take many forms, including bullying (physical assaults, name-calling, cyberbullying), sexual violence or harassment, emotional manipulation, or coercion.
EXPLOITATION	<p>includes—</p> <p>(a) keeping a person in a state of servitude including domestic or sexual servitude;</p> <p>(b) child pornography;</p> <p>(c) engaging in any other form of commercial sexual exploitation, including, but not limited to, pimping, pandering, procuring, profiting from prostitution and maintaining a brothel;</p> <p>(d) causing a person to transport illegal items within or across borders</p> <p>(e) deriving a benefit through the abuse of another person;</p> <p>[derived from the Trafficking in Persons Act (2103)],</p>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[EDUCATORS GUIDE to NEW CHILD PROTECTION ACT](#)

[T&T CHILDREN'S ACT 2012](#)

[United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2023](#)

[NSPCC, Let children know you're listening, 2019](#)

[UN DATA Resources on Violence against Children](#)

[Annual Certification for Child Protection \(International Schools\)](#)