Child safeguarding

Public summary for families, schools, volunteers and visitors

Every child has the right to feel safe, respected and included at The EARTH Centre. We do not tolerate abuse, neglect, exploitation, bullying or discrimination. This summary explains the conduct we expect and how to raise a concern. The full Child Safeguarding Policy Framework remains the governing policy.

Who this applies to

These expectations apply to directors, staff, instructors, volunteers, contractors, partner schools, caregivers and visitors. They protect all children under 18 who take part in EARTH activities, including children who communicate through gestures, assistive tools or behaviour rather than speech.

Respectful support and clear boundaries

- Treat every child with dignity. Explain activities in an accessible way and respect their choices, distress signals and need for a break.
- Offer physical support only as trained and instructed. Explain necessary contact, seek cooperation and use the least intrusive assistance appropriate to the activity.
- Keep interactions observable and appropriately supervised. Do not take a child into an isolated space or arrange private contact, transport or social-media communication.
- Never use humiliation, threats, corporal punishment, sexualised behaviour or contact, or discriminatory language.
- Only authorised personnel may photograph or record children, and only within valid permissions and safeguarding instructions. A school visit or donation does not create permission to photograph beneficiaries.

Preparing people to work with children

Role-appropriate screening, required register checks, references, induction and supervision must be completed before a person is permitted the relevant access to children. A declaration or police clearance does not replace required checks against the applicable statutory registers. Volunteers may perform only duties for which EARTH has trained and authorised them.

If you are worried about a child

- Protect immediate safety. Seek emergency medical or police assistance where necessary. Do not wait for an internal meeting or approval.
- Listen calmly. Take the child seriously, avoid leading questions and do not promise secrecy. Explain that you need to tell someone who can help.
- Record the facts promptly: date, time, place, people present, what you saw and the child's own words or communication. Do not investigate or confront the person alleged to have caused harm.

- Report promptly to the designated safeguarding lead. If that person is unavailable or implicated, use the CEO or an unimplicated Board representative.
- Preserve relevant records securely. Share only with people who need the information to protect the child or fulfil legal duties.

Reporting outside EARTH

Internal reporting never replaces or delays a legal duty to report to the authorities. Where the Children's Act reporting threshold applies, use the prescribed Form 22 and report to the provincial Department of Social Development, a designated child protection organisation or a police official. Knowledge of a sexual offence against a child must be reported immediately to SAPS under the applicable law. Anyone may approach a competent authority directly without EARTH's permission.

Contact and escalation

Designated safeguarding lead and direct contact: Executive Director & CEO, Fazlyn Bhyat-Naidoo

fazlyn@earthcentre.org.za

Unimplicated alternate and direct contact: Operations Manager, Kirsty Popplestone

info@earthcentre.org.za

Accountability

EARTH must protect people who raise concerns in good faith from retaliation, take proportionate immediate protective action and cooperate with competent authorities. The Board oversees material safeguarding risks without replacing statutory investigations. Request the full policy from our team.

Related documents: Child Safeguarding Policy Framework V2 2024; Volunteer Agreement; Privacy Notice; Health and Safety Guidelines. Reporting reference: Children's Act 38 of 2005, section 110 and prescribed Form 22, available through www.gov.za and knowledgehub.health.gov.za.