

APPROVED by director of
Diversity Development Group
17 April 2025

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STANDARDS OF DIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

1. INTRODUCTION

DDG affirms its belief in the rights of all children, including the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence, as set out in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and in the Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention, 2007).

For the purposes of the present policy, a child is any person under the age of eighteen years.

Children with whom DDG staff, volunteers, interns, external collaborators and associates come in contact will be assured the rights expressed in the UNCRC.

DDG takes the prevention of child abuse very seriously. DDG understands that child abuse and inappropriate contact of children is a pervasive problem throughout the world that must be managed in proactive manner. Therefore, the writing of this manual and guidelines shows the commitment to taking proactive steps to protect children in DDG programs and facilities.

DDG is committed to making decisions and taking actions that are guided by the principle of the “best interest of the child”.

2. CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The Child Protection Policy document outlines policies regulating the behaviour and approaches taken by personnel, interns, volunteers and collaborators of DDG within the undertaking of their professional roles.

The policy sets out the basic principles on which it is based, and specifically addresses the following aspects of the professional life of employees, interns, volunteers and collaborators working at DDG, within and outside its premises: screening and hiring; conduct when working in contact with children; training, and working with other Partners.

3. PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

DDG is committed to the following values and principles, which should be respected and promoted by all its staff, interns, volunteers and collaborators:

- DDG values and treats every person without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the age, race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, language, gender identity or sexual orientation, property, disability, birth or other status.
- DDG recognises the right of every child to be protected from harm and abuse.

- The Organisation takes all necessary action to prevent any harm from being done against children, and to report abuse against children.
- The best interest of the child always comes first in the undertaking of our Organisation's activities.
- DDG promotes the right of children to be heard and share their views, and supports this approach DDG wishes to provide all necessary guidance to its employees, interns, volunteers and collaborators who work in close contact with children.

4. SCREENING AND HIRING PRACTICES

DDG establishes and sustains proper hiring and volunteer, internship selection practices, including completed applications, reference checks, Criminal Background Checks, Social Security checks and documented personnel files, and includes specific reference to Child Protection in its Code of Conduct.

a. Applications:

- All prospective staff members/volunteers/interns will complete an application form to work or volunteer or intern that includes questions regarding past work history, volunteer experience, and education.
- All Application forms will include a statement that DDG has a zero-tolerance standard for abuse and inappropriate behaviour by staff members.
- All staff/volunteers/associates who may be involved in working with children and young people, or who are deemed likely to come in contact with children in the fulfilment of their duties, will be requested to provide a certificate of their national criminal record, according to national legislation.

b. Reference checks:

- DDG reserves the right to apply the following reference check procedures to any candidate applying for a post:
- Contacting references indicated by prospective staff and volunteers, including close family member to the applicant.
- Contacting previous employers/agencies to check if the prospective staff or volunteer is eligible for rehire, as well as to ask about the ability of the applicant to work with children.
- Verbally verifying written references via telephone or other means of contact.
- Researching a candidate online and checking for red flags for working with children (i.e. Google Search, any national sexual predator web sites, and social networking sites).

c. Interviews:

- Prospective staff members should be interviewed by at least two separate staff members. A 'Realistic Job Preview' or 'Working Interview' meets this requirement; it is important that the candidate is assessed by more than one staff member.
- All interviews will be documented on an association -approved interview form that ensures the consistency of the questions asked. DDG interview evaluation forms may be used during the interview process.

5. PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT WHEN COMING IN CONTACT/WORKING WITH CHILDREN

- a. Prior to performing any work duties, staff members/volunteers will sign and date a copy of the Code of Conduct of the Organisation, to which the Child Protection Policy is annexed. They will receive the updated copy of the Code of Conduct and of the Child Protection Policy annually.
- b. The Code of Conduct will be maintained in the personnel file and is annexed to their employment contract.
- c. The Rights and Justice Unit at DDG will review the Child Protection Policy periodically (minimum once per year), and share it with the Human Resources, all Department Coordinators and all Unit Coordinators, who will in turn share it with all staff/interns and volunteers. The Code of Conduct is developed by the Human Resources staff in cooperation with the Rights and Justice Unit, and will be available electronically and in its printed version. Staff, interns and volunteers will receive a copy and be requested to sign it.
- d. All external collaborators and associates will be provided the Child Protection Policy and the Code of Conduct and will be requested to sign it if they work or may come in contact with children and young people of less than 18 years of age.
- e. The Code of Conduct includes the procedures for data collection and treatment of data about children and young people. Data privacy and protection issues shall comply with relevant EU rules (especially the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679. If personal data about children and young people needs to be collected, written informed consent will be sought from their parents/legal guardians. The data will be collected and used only for the specific purposes for which they are provided. Staff working with children and needing to collect personal data about children or young people shall refer to the Data Protection Policy of DDG and to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679. DDG does not share the personal data provided with any other entity.
- f. Staff who may come in contact with personal data of research participants is required to sign a declaration of confidentiality before engaging in research. The declaration of confidentiality is specific to each case/project.
- g. All publications must comply with the Child Protection Policy, before being publicised or shared.
- h. Disclosing of information that identifies children who come in contact with our staff, volunteers, associates, and anyone having a role within DDG, is restricted by the terms of international, European and Lithuanian regulations and legislation. Written informed consent of the parents/legal guardians shall be sought. In accordance with article 3 of the UNCRC, the best interests of the child will be the fundamental principle applied in all cases. This includes disclosing any type of information (including images) regarding the children we come in contact with, on any media, including printed, online or other.
- i. Data, including images, of children and young people are only collected if strictly necessary and foreseen as specific activity of the Organisation or of a project that the Organisation implements. Their use is therefore only limited to the duration of the project, the specific purpose for which they were provided and collected. Specific permission of the child's legal guardians as well as the approval of the child will be sought by the staff of the Organisation

implementing the activity, according to law requirements. Acquired images and data are stored on the local server of DDG and are accessible only by the staff who have the specific credentials and who have subscribed the Code of Conduct. The data in the local server are protected by password and cyber-protected by any kind of external access.

j. The rules and expectations will be shared with each new employee/volunteer and intern and will be regularly reinforced with existing staff and volunteers. This will be done in new employee training, children's rights training, and the use of a comprehensive Code of Conduct.

k. All members of staff, volunteers, interns, external collaborators and associates have the obligation to report any child abuse concerns they may have or suspect. Staff/volunteers will be instructed to report anything they notice regarding a gap between protocols and practices. Staff and volunteers working with or coming in contact with children will be also instructed, through training, on the procedures to apply in case they suspect or have knowledge of a situation of child abuse.

l. Reporting of suspected breach of the Code of Conduct, and specifically of the Child Protection Policy, follows a standard procedure, which includes a reporting form (annexed to the Code of Conduct). Reports will be treated by the Child Protection Policy Officer at DDG to this date: Lina Kisevičienė lina@diversitygroup.lt

m. Any member of staff/volunteer/intern/external collaborator or associate found in breach of the Code of Conduct, or of the Child Protection Policy on which the code draws, will be immediately suspended from their position, pending investigation, internal or by statutory authorities depending on the specific case. Disciplinary action will be undertaken, including and up to termination of employment/cessation of the professional engagement with DDG. In case of an alleged or certain crime, the staff will be immediately removed from their position and their contract terminated. a. All staff members (at minimum, all staff members/volunteers/interns working directly with children and youth) will participate in a comprehensive initial children's rights and child abuse prevention training and in further training throughout their employment period, that includes information on the Rights of the Children (UNCRC, Lanzarote Convention, National regulation), Communicating with Children, Sexual abuse, Prevention, Early Identification, Responding, Documenting, and Reporting. The training programmes are inspired by existing resources and are developed by building on the programmes already developed through our relevant projects.

6. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TRAINING

b. External collaborators and associates who may come in contact with children and young people in the fulfilment of their tasks as assigned by DDG will participate in the same child abuse prevention training.

7. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS AND AGENCIES

a. The selection of partners should take into account the child protection history of the Partner Organisation.

b. DDG reserves the right to conduct a reference check on the Partner's previous history related to child protection and its policies towards children.

c. DDG will not tolerate any inappropriate communication towards children.

d. A clear statement related to child protection and the zero-tolerance policy of DDG in relation to child abuse and inappropriate behaviour shall be included in the form for organisations wishing to become partners of DDG's on DDG website.

e. DDG must take a serious action towards any partner convicted for child abuse during the implementation of its projects/programs.

Director Lina Kisevičienė

17 April 2025