

CHILD PROTECTION INFORMATION SHEET

4 February, 2021



At NSTE we take our responsibility to protect children and young people seriously. All employees, including paid employees, contractors, tutors and volunteers who are engaged by the Synagogue to work with children and young people are expected to promote child safety by having a clear understanding of their legal child protection responsibilities and act in accordance with those responsibilities.

In particular all NSTE will:

1. Ensure that all employees are aware of their obligations to maintain professionalism in their interactions with children and young people at all times by exercising appropriate duty of care and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.
2. Follow an established process to address allegations of inappropriate behaviour by any employee towards children and young people.
3. Ensure all people working at NSTE who are required to undertake a Working With Children Check have a valid clearance for working with children.
4. Respond appropriately when we suspect a child or young person is at risk of significant harm due to possible abuse or neglect by a parent/carer or other adult.

Maintaining Professionalism

All employees are expected to act professionally and in accordance with the NSTE's expectations regarding employee conduct toward children. Employees receive guidance and professional development in relation to appropriate interactions with children and young people, how to exercise duty of care and how to maintain professional boundaries.

We understand that employees have a duty of care to:

- Ensure no child or young person is exposed to foreseeable risk of harm;
- Take action to minimise risk;
- Supervise actively; and
- If they see others acting inappropriately with children and young people, report concerns to either Rabbi Clebaner or Rabbi Roberts depending on the context or seek further advice.

Our employees also understand that they are in a position of trust, authority and influence in relation to children and young people, and that it is important they do not take advantage of that position to mistreat or misguide children and young people either intentionally or inadvertently.

Employees strive to:

- Demonstrate appropriate relationships with children that cannot be misinterpreted as overly personal or intimate;
- Remain within the responsibilities of their roles and refer or report concerns for the welfare of children and young people appropriately;
- Minimise physical contact with children unless it is necessary to exercise appropriate duty of care;
- Follow the NSTE's policies and procedures relating to promoting child safety and identifying and responding to child abuse and neglect.

Addressing complaints of inappropriate behaviour by employees

We are committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for both students and employees. This includes addressing complaints of inappropriate behaviour by employees towards any child or young person.

Such complaints are handled differently to other types of complaints which may arise at NSTE because of legal obligations established by the Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW). The Office of the Children's Guardian is a government agency which requires organisations working with children to ensure systems are in place for recording and responding to all allegations of a child protection nature against employee. You should be aware that 'employees' include volunteer helpers as well as paid employees.

If you have concerns about alleged inappropriate behaviour by an employee towards any child or young person it is important that you raise your concerns as follows:

- In the case of MEAH teachers, with Rabbi Misha Clebaner, who will consult with President Gwen Harrison
- In the case of Bar/Bat Mitzvah teachers, with Rabbi Nicole Roberts, who will consult with President Gwen Harrison
- If the concern relates to either Rabbi Clebaner or Rabbi Roberts, with the President Gwen Harrison

All complaints are investigated and resolved through a fair and confidential process which involves listening to 'both sides of the story' and giving all involved an opportunity to be heard. If there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm, a report will be made to the Child Protection Helpline of the Department of Communities and Justice. If the concerns involve alleged criminal behaviour they will be reported to the Police. In either case, NSTE will await the outcome of any response by the authorities before continuing with its own investigation.

At the end of an investigation a finding will be made and appropriate follow up determined. This may include no action, increased support, professional development, increased supervision/monitoring or disciplinary action, removal from duties or termination of employment/engagement.

If harm has occurred to a child or young person, counselling or other support will be offered to them.

Screening of those working at NSTE

All paid workers (e.g Meah teachers and bar/bar mitzvah tutors) and volunteer leaders involved in the Synagogue's activities relating to direct unsupervised work with children are required to have a Working With Children Check clearance before they can work with children. The Synagogue verifies these clearances prior to engagement.

The purpose of the check is to exclude people from working with children who are not suitable. A person who has been convicted or found guilty of a listed serious offence against children (whether in NSW or elsewhere) is prohibited from working in a child-related role.

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The participation of parents and close relatives of children and young people as volunteers is welcome and appreciated for various activities both at NSTE and at NSTE related activities. It is important that all volunteers are aware that they are subject to child protection legislation. This means all volunteers must:

- Be registered with the NSTE office.
- Obtain a Working With Children Check clearance if required for specific child-related NSTE activities/roles.
- Not engage in any inappropriate behaviour towards any children. In particular although volunteers are technically not employed by NSTE, they are considered to be 'employees' for legal purposes and need to be aware that complaints about inappropriate behaviour towards any child or young person may require reporting to external authorities and may require investigation by NSTE

Volunteers who are not the parent or a close relative of a child at NSTE will be expected to undertake a Working With Children Check.

- A 'parent of a child' includes a carer or person who has legal responsibility for a child.
- A 'close relative' includes a spouse or de facto partner, child, step-child, parent, step-parent, sibling, step-sibling, grandparent, step-grandparent, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew. In the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, a close relative includes people who are part of the extended family or kin of the child according to the indigenous kinship system.

Similarly, any volunteer working in a high risk role will be required to undertake a Working With Children Check. High risk roles are those where volunteers are working with particularly vulnerable children:

- Providing personal care with intimate contact to children with disabilities
- Providing mentoring services

Further information on the Working With Children Check can be found on the website for the NSW Commission for Children and Young People <http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au>

Responding to risk of harm

Rabbis and people working in education are mandatory reporters. This means that if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of 'significant harm' from abuse or neglect, then a report must be made to the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) Child Protection Helpline (CP Helpline).

Depending on the context, Meah teachers, bar/bat mitzvah tutors and other employees, volunteers or members are expected to inform either Rabbi Nicole Roberts, Rabbi Misha Clebaner or Temple Administrator Lynne Michel, if they are concerned that a child or young person may be at risk. It is the role of either Rabbi Roberts, Rabbi Clebaner or Ms Michel to make the report to the CP Helpline.

In making a report they will consider all of the information and seek appropriate guidance from the DCJ's structured decision-making tool known as the Mandatory Reporter Guide. Any information about a child or young person at risk is kept confidentially by the Synagogue.

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In situations where a child or young person is considered to be at risk NSTE will work with the child/young person and family to assist them as much as possible.

If you have concerns about a child or young person who you consider may be at risk, please discuss your concerns with the either Rabbi Clebaner, Rabbi Roberts or Lynne Michel as soon as possible and maintain confidentiality.