



Lilipad Child Safeguarding Policy

Written: May, 2023

Revised: February, 2025

Reviewed by: Jennifer Seidel, MSc and Elementary Education Certified

This document outlines Lilipad's child safeguarding policy, which establishes best practices for volunteers involved with Lilipad to ensure the physical, psychological, and emotional safety of the children and families involved with our program. All volunteers are expected to be familiar with and adhere to these guidelines during all activities related to Lilipad.

This policy will be reviewed formally every year, or in accordance with governmental guidelines.

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Scope
3. Screening
4. Good Practice with Children
5. Identifying Abuse
6. Responding to Complaints or Suspicion of Abuse
7. Media Practice
8. Legal Framework
9. Procedures in case of breach
10. Appendix: Code of Conduct

1. Introduction

Who are we?

Lilipad is a nonprofit organisation that leverages the power of reading to improve the life prospects of children subject to displacement and/or social exclusion. Our main activities include establishing multilingual libraries that are easily accessible to such children, and making these spaces come alive through storytelling workshops, educational experiences, and reading sessions. As such, our volunteers and staff are likely to come into regular contact with children, particularly those with migration backgrounds, many of whom may have had or may still be experiencing varying levels of hardship or trauma. Equally, Lilipad volunteers are likely to come into contact with the families of these children, and so we extend our code of conduct to cover interactions with families in our code of conduct below.

Why do we need a safeguarding policy?

In any situation in which adults are working with children and young people, defined here as any individual under the age of 18, the adults have a legal and moral obligation to look out for the best interests of those children and young people. Children are considered a vulnerable population, as they are in varying stages of development and may have a reduced understanding of their rights and safety needs. Adults hold a position of power when interacting with children, and this imbalance of power is even more pronounced in the situation of children with migration backgrounds. Indeed, even with the parents of these families, we must be aware of a power imbalance caused by migration status and other factors, and work to ensure the parents are also not taken advantage of.

Safeguarding Officer and Contact

As Lilipad is almost entirely volunteer run and experiences some amount of turnover in our community, we designate our core team members to act as our safeguarding officers. The core team member in charge of any given case will not be in any way associated or implicated in that case, and will work closely with the safeguarding officer at our partner institution to ensure proper, confidential and professional treatment of the case. Therefore, in case of any questions regarding our safeguarding policy, code of conduct, or incidents that require reporting, please contact: community@lilipadlibrary.org

2. Scope

The Lilipad Child Safeguarding Policy applies to the following:

- Employees of Lilipad e.V. (full-time, part-time and freelancers)
- Volunteers of Lilipad e.V. (core volunteers and reading volunteers)
- Ad hoc volunteers of Lilipad e.V. (irregular volunteers)

Henceforth 'staff' shall refer to employees and regular volunteers only. This safeguarding policy applies to Germany only.

3. Screening of Employees and Volunteers

All staff appointments whose role involves direct engagement with children and young people will be subject to a probationary period consisting of 1-2 trial visits to a Lilipad library, during which they will be accompanied and supervised. Staff appointments will not be confirmed unless Lilipad is confident that the applicant can be safely entrusted with children and young people.

In Germany, providing a police background check (*Führungszeugnis*) will be mandatory for all existing and new staff members whose role involves direct engagement with children and young people on a continuous basis. All staff members will be required to submit their police background check once they have completed their probationary period and only if they intend to accept the staff appointment. They will be precluded from hosting events or interacting with children without another Lilipad staff member present (whose police background check has been accepted) until it is submitted and deemed satisfactory. Failure to submit a satisfactory police background check within a reasonable period will result in Lilipad staff members being precluded from working with children as a core part of their role.

In the case where volunteers providing services or undertaking duties at a Lilipad library are recruited by the local partner organisation (and not by Lilipad), the local partner organisation will assume sole responsibility for said volunteers. These volunteers will be covered by the Child Safety Policy of the local partner organisation. They will not be subject to Lilipad's Child Safeguarding Policy.

Ad hoc volunteers who are not joining Lilipad as regular volunteers (volunteering for specific events), or guests (performers, artists, photographer etc.) are not required to submit a police background check. They will be required to have a Lilipad staff member or staff member of the partner organisation physically present to attend a Lilipad library or co-host an event with a Lilipad staff member. They will not be left alone for extended periods with individual children or with small groups of children.

4. Good Practice with Children

All Lilipad staff members must recognize the importance of creating a safe space for children during any interactions, and strive to implement such a space. This space should be safe in the physical, psychological, and cultural senses of the term. Specific practices will be outlined in our code of conduct, but more generally defined here.

- *Physical Safety*

Creating a physically safe environment means ensuring the children in one's care will be safe from physical danger or harm. This includes ensuring the room is bodily safe and comfortable, with adequate space for the activity in question. Children should be kept away from tools or equipment that pose significant danger, and there should be emergency procedures in place. Additionally, the children must be

kept safe from any sort of physical or sexual abuse at the hands of the volunteer or others present. This includes slapping, spanking, and touching of inappropriate body parts. Germany does not allow corporal punishment, no matter the cultural norms of the staff member or children in question.

- *Psychological Safety*

Psychological safety with children, particularly those who have experienced a major trauma such as many with a displacement background may have, is a complex topic. Resources for further education will be listed below.

At Lilipad, we define psychological safety to mean that the children feel free to express themselves. Our staff members are tasked with creating a welcoming environment in which children feel comfortable and able to express their needs and interests. The children should not fear judgement or retribution. Our staff members should refrain from insulting, yelling, or threatening children.

Additionally, working with children who may have experienced trauma requires heightened sensitivity. It is important not to pry into a child's experience of trauma unless they instigate such a conversation. Discussing traumatic events too soon or in the wrong way can act to retraumatize the child. For more information on working with children after a traumatic event, we recommend looking into the [Papyrus Project](#), subsection on psychosocial support for youth refugees.

- *Cultural Safety*

Cultural safety can be considered as a facet of psychological safety, but it is particularly important in our context working with migrants and displaced people. Again, more resources will be listed below, including some great exercises to help staff members identify their own cultural context, as a means of understanding how others can be different.

Lilipad staff members are expected to approach all children and families, as well as colleagues, with kindness and open-mindedness. Remember that a practice that may seem rude or odd to one person could be commonplace to another, and the reverse may be true as well. Lilipad staff are encouraged to learn more about the backgrounds and cultures of those they are working with, and ask questions in cases of confusion. Lilipad will not tolerate any form of hate speech, harassment, racism, anti-semitism, or discrimination. Children as well as families should feel safe to express and share their cultural and religious practices, so long as they do not cause harm to anyone else.

For more information on cultural diversity in work with children, we recommend looking into the [Papyrus Project](#), subsection on multicultural understanding.

- *Privilege of Authority*

It is important to be aware that working with migrant and refugee children, as well as adults, can entail an unequal distribution of power. Especially as a (white) person in a position of authority or responsibility, we have a special responsibility to reflect on the impact of our actions and decisions. These children are often in a particularly

vulnerable life situation, characterized by migration, flight or discrimination. In this context, our behavior, our language and our influence on the children can be perceived as part of an existing power imbalance. It is therefore essential to act respectfully, mindfully and reflectively to ensure that we do not exploit power or create unwanted hierarchies in our role. We must continually strive to foster an environment where children feel safe and equal.

5. Identifying Abuse

As an adult working with children, it is also important to be aware of the signs that indicate a child may be experiencing abuse in another space. Below we share the definitions of different forms of abuse, followed by common signs of such abuse. It is important to note that the indicators are only *possibly* the result of abuse, and can be present in children for other reasons as well. Whenever in doubt, please consult with the social worker on site.

Defining Abuse:

The World Health Organization's view of child maltreatment differentiates between the following five forms of neglect and abuse which can pose a potential or actual risk to the health, development or dignity of the child:

1. Neglect and negligent treatment: repeated or persistent failure by the responsible caregivers to provide the necessary care to meet a child's basic needs. This may include failing to: provide food, clothing, or shelter; protect a child from physical and emotional harm; ensure access to medical care.

Possible indicators of neglect include:

- Recurrent problems with personal hygiene, constant hunger, emaciation, inadequate clothing, untreated medical problems, compulsive stealing or scavenging, poor relationships with peers

2. Physical abuse: all forms of violence against children leading to physical injuries, including but not limited to hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, scalding, and fabricating or inducing illness.

Possible indicators of physical abuse include:

- Physical signs such as bruises, cuts, burns, or broken bones, particularly those that do not match the given account of an event or are repeated and subject to delay in seeking care

3. Sexual abuse: sexual acts performed with or in the presence of a child either against his or her will or to which the child, being at a physical, emotional, cognitive or linguistic disadvantage, can unknowingly give consent. This includes physical contact as well as viewing or discussing pornographic material or sexual acts.

Possible indicators of sexual abuse include:

- Sudden changes in behaviour, displays of affection which are sexual and age inappropriate, tendency to cling or need constant reassurance, tendency to cry easily, regression to younger behaviour, unexplained gifts or money, depression and withdrawal, wetting or soiling at an inappropriate age

4. Emotional Abuse: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. This may include conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved, or inadequate.

Possible indicators of emotional abuse include:

- Rejection, isolation, blaming themselves for adult actions, disproportionate anger or affection

5. Exploitation: the economic or other exploitation of a child through activities carried out by the child for the benefit of a third party. These activities encompass exploitative child labour, child pornography and child prostitution as well as all other activities which carry risks, impede the child's education or could harm the child's health or physical, mental, emotional, moral or social development.

Supplementary definitions and possible indicators of abuse and neglect are taken from the Oxfordshire County Council Child Protection Policy, found [here](#). For more in depth descriptions and definitions of different forms of abuse, see the [Papyrus Project](#), subsection on abuse.

6. Responding to Complaints or Suspicions of Abuse

In the case of suspicion, accusation, or complaints of abuse, Lilipad will follow a standard procedure outlined below. First and foremost, it's important for all staff to maintain the privacy of the individuals in question. Staff must not discuss any cases with others, beyond the safeguarding officer at the partner organization and the Lilipad staff member assigned to the case.

In case of suspicion, accusation, or disclosure:

1. The Lilipad staff member can note down the specifics of the situation or disclosure privately, but is encouraged **not** to discuss the situation directly with the suspected victim of abuse. Untrained professionals can accidentally pose leading questions that may complicate a case.
2. The Lilipad staff member should inform the Child Safety Officer of the partner facility if it is suspected that a child is suffering abuse according to the above definitions.
3. The Lilipad staff member should inform the Lilipad Safeguarding team by contacting through the email listed above. The incident will be noted, and an appropriate core team member will be assigned to the case.

4. The Lilipad Safeguarding Officer for the case will follow up with the premises' Child Safety Officer to determine if abuse was reported to child protection services. If the incident wasn't reported but Lilipad believes a report is warranted, child protection services will be contacted for such.

Tips for navigating direct disclosures

Should a potential victim speak directly on the subject of alleged abuse, below are a few suggestions for how to respond.

- Listen carefully and kindly, but try to refrain from making comments that express your own feelings toward the situation. This can confuse the processing of the case down the line.
- Do not ask leading questions. Ideally, staff should direct the situation to the safeguarding officers of the facility and Lilipad as soon as possible. If necessary though, try to stick to generic questions like "what happened?", "when was this?", etc.
- Reassure the child that they are safe to share this information with you and that you will act to help following Lilipad's guidelines.
- Do not promise confidentiality. If a child says you mustn't tell anyone, you can say that Lilipad has special guidelines that can help address this situation in a safe way, and that only those who need to know will be involved.
- Do not under any circumstances approach the accused abuser about the disclosure. This can be dangerous for all involved, and the site child safety officer will be trained in how to do this.

7. Media, Social Media and Data Protection

With regard to protecting the personal data of minors, Lilipad e.V. adheres to the policy of not collecting any data about them unless absolutely necessary. Volunteers should not take and store photos of minors on personal devices. In cases in which personal data of minors is collected, this is done in accordance with the data protection legislation in force, e.g. under the German Federal Data Protection Act. The storage and use of media portraying the work of Lilipad e.V. is restricted to content in which the children are not recognisable or identifiable. In the eventuality that children are recognisable, this will happen on the basis of a declaration of consent by guardians and, age and maturity permitting, by their children. Any such content is for use on Lilipad's behalf only, and should not be shared on personal staff accounts or media.

8. Legal Framework

Lilipad is subject to the laws of the Federal Republic of Germany on the protection of children and young people, particularly:

Book Eight of the Social Welfare Law – Assistance for Children and Young Persons: § 72a SGB VIII, honorary and part-time) in accordance with § 72a SGB VIII" (in German: Angaben zur Wahrnehmung des Schutzauftrages bei Kindeswohlgefährdung nach §8a SGB VIII und zur Sicherstellung der persönlichen Eignung des Personals (haupt-,ehren- und nebenamtlich) nach § 72a SGB VIII), §§ 174-184c, StGB.

The **Protection of Young Persons Act** (German: Jugendschutzgesetz or JuSchG).

The relevant legislation of any countries in which Lilipad works.

9. Procedures in Case of Safeguarding Policy Breach

If a Lilipad staff member is reported to have breached our safeguarding policy and code of conduct, the following steps will be taken:

1. The staff member will be removed from work in our organisation immediately, pending investigation.
2. The Lilipad core team will conduct an investigation into the claim, including interviews with individuals involved.
3. If the report is substantiated, an appropriate response will be administered, ranging from probation to removal from our organisation.