

# Child protection policy - research group DOT



## **Impressum**

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## 1. Preface

Protection of children and young people is a topic that accompanied the work of practitioners in child and youth welfare as well as in the child and adolescent psychiatry since a long time. The development of guidelines in these fields ensure the protection of children and adolescents. As a research group dedicated to the mental health of children and adolescents, we want to ensure that our work guarantees the protection of children and adolescents. For this reason, we have decided to develop our own child protection policy.

## 2. Introduction

The research group “DOT - The Open Door” is a research project of the Ludwig Boltzmann Society in Vienna and the Karl Landsteiner Private University in Krems, which is located in Lower Austria. Our goal is to strengthen the mental, emotional, and social well-being of young people aged 9-12 years. In order to achieve this, we are working on this perennial project to answer the following research question: What helps young people to enter into and maintain positive and supportive relationships with their peers?

For this purpose, we cooperate with schools and groups of students, as well as youth groups of bearers of free child and youth welfare throughout Lower Austria. The experiences and wishes of those involved persons are the focus our work to develop methods that are perceived as meaningful and supportive by those involved. The implementing team consists of international researchers and universities supported by specialists and experts from the region.

The objectives of the research group DOT are:

- Development of methods for strengthening social connectivity.
- Development of a combined offer (analogue and online) with digital educational games which deepen the selected analogue-conveyed learning objectives.
- Networking throughout Lower Austria and beyond.
- the free provision of all offers and Research content free from economic interests.

### 2.1 Our attitude

As a non-profit group of scientists, we are conducting research for the benefit of the public. That means that sharing our findings is central for our actions. We believe that research should be open, transparent, and accessible. Everything we create, e.g. research results, methods and tools we provide free of charge to researchers, educators and the general public.

Children and young people of today shape the society and the future of tomorrow. Their mental, emotional, and social well-being is a prerequisite for coping with challenges on the path to their future.

We think that children and adolescents are experts for their own well-being and we want to give them space for participation in our project. In addition, we see the people who care for

children and adolescents daily (parents, educators, professionals) as experts and let their experiences and opinions flow into every project step.

We look at people whose mental wellbeing has been affected by stress as experts. Through their lived experiences and the exchange about it, our work is purposefully enriched.

## 2.2 Principles for the development of the child protection guideline

- children's league workshops, expertise of the ECPAT association and the Austrian League for Child and Youth Health
- team discussions, observance of the mission statement of the Ludwig Boltzmann Society and consideration of ethical requirements
- legal framework Austria and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Based on the following sources: <https://www.lbg.ac.at/themen/leitbild> Access: May 23, 2019  
<https://www.kinderrechtskonvention.info/> Access: May 23, 2019

## 2.3 Definitions violence and abuse

"Child abuse or maltreatment includes all forms of physical and / or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, neglect or commercial or other exploitation that could jeopardize or threaten the health, survival, development, or the dignity of the child within a relationship of responsibility, trust or power." Based on this definition, the following five main categories from child abuse derive.

Emotional abuse includes the denial of an age-appropriate and psychosocial development-promoting environment, as well as ongoing or severe verbal abuse, humiliation, devaluation, or rejection that causes adverse effects on a child's mental development. For us, this also includes bullying in all facets (online etc.).

Physical abuse is the actual or potential physical injury to a child or failure to protect the child from physical injury.

Sexual abuse is the actual or threatened sexual touch of a child, i.e. all forms of sexual activity such as immoral touch, sexual intercourse, etc., and activities without physical contact, such as showing and creating pornographic material.

Exploitation includes the commercial or other profiteering of activities performed by the child benefiting us or a third party. These activities include exploitative child labor and child prostitution, as well as any other activity that leads to the economic exploitation of the child, impairs the child's physical and mental health, prevents him / her from education and disturbs the moral and / or psychosocial development of the child.

Neglect begins as soon as a child is deprived of basic services for their psychosocial development - for example in the areas of health, nutrition, clothing, housing, education and others.

The definitions are based on: WHO, [http://www.who.int/topics/child\\_abuse/en/](http://www.who.int/topics/child_abuse/en/), Access: 20 May 2017; CRIN - Child Rights International Network <https://www.crin.org/en/home/rights/themes/violence/unstudy/forms-violence>, accessed: May 20, 2017 taken from the protection guideline of the children's league

### 3. Preventive measures

The scope of the present child protection line covers the duration of the research project until 2021. The following points therefore refer to the ongoing project steps. An evaluation of the results of the measures is ensured by the regular discussion within the team meetings of the research group.

#### 3.1 Code of Conduct

The purpose of the Code of Conduct for dealing with children is to raise awareness of shared responsibility for the safety of children. Furthermore, employees as well as persons, who have access to children, e.g. through workshops of the research group, have to be protected against false accusations regarding their behaviour towards children. All research group members must sign and follow the Code of Conduct. By signing the Code of Conduct, the undersigned commits to actively helping to build and maintain an environment that is safe for children.

All employees of the DOT research group are responsible for the observance, publication and dissemination of the rules of conduct. They are obliged to adhere to the following codes of conduct, both when dealing with children and adolescents on behalf of or in the context of an activity of the DOT research group and in their private environment.

Each undersigning person undertakes to **ALWAYS**

- respect the dignity of the child.
- remain non-violent in verbal and physical interactions.
- preserve the physical, mental and sexual integrity of the child.
- be sensitive to the privacy of children.
- give attention and appreciation to all.
- be equally involved in the protection of children.
- position themselves against mobbing at all times and to support those affected by bullying.
- act in accordance with the internal reporting procedure in the event of suspicion.

But **commits NEVER to**

- threat, discriminate, or intimidate children.
- beat children or otherwise physically offend them.
- encourage, caress, kiss, or touch children in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.
- use inappropriate, immoral, or abusive language.
- use sexual, inappropriate, or ambiguous expressions with a child.

- help a child with intimate tasks that it can handle on its own unprompted (such as going to the bathroom, bathing or changing clothes).
- spend an excessive amount of time with a single child separately from the other children.
- abuse or exploit a child emotionally, physically or sexually. In particular, never engage in sexual activity with a child or expose it to pornographic material.
- ask for a service or favour that injured a child's dignity.
- tolerate or support such behaviour from third parties.

Reference: Orientation to international standards such as ECPAT International, KCS (KeepingChildren Safe), Kindernothilfe e.V. etc. s. also list of sources, child protection policy KINDERLIGA Version 1.1. April 2018 \_ to request a service or favor that is abusive or exploitative.

### 3.2 Implementation of Research Group

DOT staff members include: full-time and voluntary staff, volunteers and permanent external service providers (e.g. trainers), interns

Employee selection: The attitude towards violence against children is addressed before the start of employment and they are accompanied by regular intervisions, even in the voluntary work.

Further education: All employees will be informed about the child protection policy of the research group in a personal interview. The contents of the guideline are regularly discussed at team meetings and adapted to the corresponding project steps.

### 3.3 Communication standards

Media reports can be an important element to present the work of the research group and to reach a broader target group. However, this also involves the risk of violating childrens' rights. In order to protect the girls and boys involved from dangers such as violence or stigmatization, the DOT research group ensures that every production and dissemination of media content preserves the dignity of the children and protects their identity. The DOT research group therefore requires each rapporteur to respect the general communication standards on child protection and to apply additional safeguards when working with vulnerable children.

*General communication standards on child protection (also for media representatives):*

All media content is based on the values of respect and equality and preserves the dignity of the person represented. There will be no publicly disclosed case histories related to individual children. There will be no stereotypical representations. Before creating media content, children and their parents and schools should be informed in an understandable manner about their purpose and use.

For the use of images in media content, the consent of the affected children and the parents / guardians must be obtained. For general reports about our project, the approval of the

school is sufficient, if there are declaration of consent. The privacy of all persons in the project and project environment is respected at all times. Pseudonyms are always used for the children, unless the mention of the name is in the interest of the child concerned and takes place with the consent of the child and the parents or guardians. Children must be appropriately clothed. The use of images stored in the DOT research group is analogous to the principles described above, i.e. the publication always follows the principles of child protection. If no subsequent consent can be obtained from the child concerned, pictures will not be used.

Based in particular on Kindernothilfe e.V. and ECPAT International Child Protection Policy KINDERLIGA Version 1.1. April 2018.

### 3.4 Images & Media

On the Internet, not only pornographic depictions of children and misrepresentations, which constitute a criminal offense according to StGB, § 207a, are in circulation. In principle, all photos of children and adolescents can be misused. Therefore, careful handling of the creation of photographs in general and their use is of central importance to the DOT research group. If photos are published, for example, in the context of a project documentation, on facebook or e.g. on the website, the separate consent of the legal guardian AND the child must also be obtained. The subject of photo rights is regularly discussed in the team in order to protect the privacy of children and adolescents. Only the members of the research group, in particular those responsible for the social media, have access to the folders with photos and films.

### 3.5 Data of children and adolescents

All data concerning the children and adolescent that were collected and recorded during the the research project will only be used within the DOT research group and completely anonymised. The privacy of the children and adolescents is guaranteed and no conclusions can be drawn about a child, his / her family or his / her place of residence.

Each data collection is discussed in advance with the responsible ethics committee and the education directorate.

## 4. Handling suspected cases

The detailed handling of suspected cases of suspected fraud will be compiled in a separate committee from June 2019 onwards. Currently, researchers in the research group are required to report this back to the school or caregiver if a child reports of threatening experiences outside the research group.

For suspected cases against the staff of the research group, a report template is created for the homepage. All involved parents and children are given the contact details of the research group at first contact in order to be present at all times as a contact person.