



AY INSTITUTE

Child Protection Policy

January, 2025

Introduction

This policy is designed to protect all children and young people who participate in AY Institute activities. The policy defines children and young people as anyone under the age of 18 years and includes students participating in AY Institute projects' activities and initiatives.

Important term:

Child is any person younger than 18-years-of-age.

About AY Institute

AY Institute is a non-profit organization committed to empowering young people and underserved communities in Europe and beyond. It has extensive expertise in non-formal education and a diverse knowledge base on topics such as youth development opportunities, sustainability, inclusion and human rights, mental and physical health, and digital tools. Since its inception in 2014, AY Institute has remained dedicated to fostering positive social change and promoting cultural diversity by collaborating with European NGOs and international organizations to host and support youth activities across multiple countries.

AY Institute recognizes the importance of safeguarding the welfare and well-being of children and young people in all its activities. It is committed to ensuring that all programs and initiatives adhere to strict child protection policies and procedures. The organization firmly believes that creating a safe and secure environment for young people is crucial to their development and future success. To uphold this commitment, AY Institute has implemented measures to ensure that all staff and volunteers receive child protection training and follow strict codes of conduct.

AY Institute's dedication to protecting children and young people under 18 reflects its unwavering commitment to empowering youth and underserved communities. By creating safe spaces for young people to learn, grow, and thrive, AY Institute contributes to a brighter future for Europe and beyond.

Aim of the Child Protection Policy

The Child and Young People Under 18 Protection Policy of AY Institute establishes guidelines, rules, and standards to ensure the safety and well-being of children involved in the organization's activities. This policy emphasizes the importance of preventing harm, safeguarding children, and fostering a culture that values their rights while promoting continuous learning.

The policy clearly defines the responsibilities of individuals within the organization to ensure the protection of children. It also outlines the appropriate measures to take in cases of suspected child harm, abuse, or any direct threat to a child's health and life.

AY Institute recognizes that implementing the Child and Young People Under 18 Protection Policy is not only a professional obligation but also a moral responsibility for all employees and collaborators. The organization is committed to creating a safe environment for children by providing education, prevention, and intervention activities to protect them.



AY Institute strives to cultivate a culture centered on the rights and safety of children and young people. By adhering to this policy and ensuring a safe and supportive environment, AY Institute fulfills its mission of empowering young people and making a positive impact on society.

Policy Coverage

This policy applies to all individuals involved with AY Institute, including:

- Paid and volunteer staff (hereafter referred to as “staff”)
- Children and young people participating in projects
- Visitors, including parents, family members, project partners, and others

AY Institute expects all individuals involved in its activities to adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in this document. Any breaches of these policies and procedures will be addressed by the Child Safety Officer.

General Rules for Interactions with Children

AY Institute welcomes all children to participate in its activities, regardless of their race, gender, nationality, religion, or health status. However, before involving a child in any activity, the consent of their caregiver is mandatory.

AY Institute's staff always interact with children with respect for their rights, dignity, and empowerment, emphasizing their right to be protected from harm and abuse. All activities involving contact with children respect their right to privacy, and direct interaction occurs only with their consent and is tailored to their needs.

Furthermore, all staff members of AY Institute:

- Treat all children equally, regardless of their beliefs, appearance, or origin;
- Show respect for the child's differences, experiences, beliefs, and perspectives;
- Listen carefully to children and show respect for their statements and experiences;
- Avoid using judgmental language or labels and communicate in a way that is appropriate for the child's level of development;
- Foster a culture of openness and mutual responsibility within the organization, encouraging discussions on child protection issues.

Rules for a Safe Relationship Between Staff and a Child

AY Institute has strict rules in place to ensure a safe and appropriate relationship between its staff and the children participating in its activities. In their interactions with children, AY Institute's paid and volunteer staff must avoid any behavior that could be considered embarrassing, humiliating, belittling, demeaning, or abusive, whether emotional, physical, or sexual in nature.

Employees and collaborators are prohibited from engaging in inappropriate physical contact with children that violates their dignity, except in cases related to play, hygienic assistance, ensuring safety, or the need to soothe the child. They must not:

- Serve children alcohol, medications, or any psychoactive substances
- Condone or participate in illegal activities involving a child
- Establish sexual relations with children or exhibit sexually provocative behavior
- Host children in their private homes
- Maintain private relationships with children outside the framework of work and support
- Accompany children during travel in the absence of a caregiver
- Sleep in the same room as children during summer camps or trips



Any suspicions regarding the conduct of AY Institute staff are thoroughly investigated and addressed without delay. By adhering to these strict rules, AY Institute aims to create a safe and supportive environment for children and promote their well-being.

Child Safety Officer

As part of its commitment to child protection, AY Institute has designated a Child Safety Officer. This role is supported by the Manager of AY Institute.

The Child Safety Officer must:

- Have completed at least one day of training on child abuse prevention and creating a child-safe organization.
- Attend further training as needed and take proactive steps to remain informed of developments in child abuse prevention.

Under the law, an organization can be held liable for negligence if abuse occurs and appropriate preventative steps have not been taken. This applies to areas such as the selection and retention of staff and procedures for supervising children and young people. For example, an organization risks liability if it hires someone without proper vetting (e.g., Working with Children Check, Police Check, reference checks, and qualification validation). If an employee with a record of violence or child abuse is hired and subsequently harms children, the organization could be deemed legally negligent in its hiring process and subject to legal action.

Those managing AY Institute projects are legally mandated to obtain a valid Working with Children Check for all staff, paid or voluntary, over the age of 18.

Responsibilities of the Child Safety Officer include:

- Confidentially documenting minor concerns about a child or young person that may contribute to a larger concerning picture. Ensure records are strictly confidential, dated, and signed.
- Reporting concerns to the police or Child Protection or supporting a staff member/volunteer making a report.
- Ensuring all individuals involved with AY Institute are aware of relevant policies and procedures.
- Monitoring any concerning emails, messages, or images online or via other technologies related to AY Institute projects.
- Promoting a culture within AY Institute that is welcoming, secure, and supportive, ensuring children and young people feel comfortable expressing difficulties or concerns.
- Overseeing the annual review and updating of policies and procedures.
- Arranging necessary training in child protection or protective behaviors for staff, volunteers, children, or young people involved with AY Institute.
- Coordinating follow-up actions required after reporting abuse to the police or Child Protection.
- Liaising with the Manager of AY Institute, who is responsible for handling media inquiries related to child protection issues.

Appointing a Child Safety Officer

For smaller programs, the Child Safety Officer may simply be the Coordinator of the project. In such cases, it is essential to ensure that the responsibilities outlined above are fully incorporated into the role.

Procedures for the Child Safety Officer

- Once notified of a concern, the Child Safety Officer will manage the case confidentially.
- Immediate steps should be taken to ensure the emotional and physical safety of the child or young person. If appropriate, their parents or caregivers will be informed.
- If necessary, before formally reporting the incident, the Child Safety Officer may consult with the Manager of AY Institute.

- If a report to the police is required, the Child Safety Officer should make the report promptly, ensuring that the child or young person's safety and welfare remain the top priority.
- The Child Safety Officer will maintain confidential written documentation of any concerns raised, including the steps taken for follow-up. All documentation must be dated and signed.
- Any necessary support for the child, young person, their family, or AY Institute staff will be arranged by the Child Safety Officer.
- If the alleged perpetrator is a staff member (paid or volunteer) of AY Institute, the Child Safety Officer must initially remove them from contact with children and young people. This may include "standing down" the individual until investigations are complete. Consultation with the Manager of AY Institute must take place before or as soon as possible after the suspension. Formal follow-up related to the staff member's status will be handled by the Manager.
- Throughout the entire process, the Child Safety Officer must keep the Manager of AY Institute informed of any developments.

The Child Safety Officer must ensure that any concerns about a child or young person's welfare are being acted upon. In some cases, this may require making a second report to the police if necessary.

Reporting Procedures

AY Institute follows these guiding principles when responding to concerns about a child or young person's safety and welfare:

- The right of the child or young person to be listened to, protected, and supported.
- The right of the child or young person and their families to have their concerns acted upon.
- The right of the alleged perpetrator to a fair process.
- Everyone's right to privacy.
- The responsibility of AY Institute to ensure all concerns are dealt with promptly and respectfully.

Risk Management

Potential risks that might arise:

- Peer bullying.
- Injuries during physical activities.
- Harm from equipment usage (e.g., VR glasses, sports equipment).

All projects and activities at AY Institute undergo regular child protection risk analysis. Risks are evaluated, and strategies are developed to minimize the likelihood of harm occurring.

Recruitment, Screening, Training, and Supervision of Staff and Volunteers

AY Institute is committed to ensuring all staff and volunteers undergo comprehensive screening to create a safe environment for the children and young people accessing its services.

Recruitment Procedures

- All advertisements and promotional materials for positions must clearly state the organization's commitment to child protection and its screening mechanisms.
- Written position descriptions must be developed for all roles, including key selection criteria that emphasize AY Institute's commitment to child protection.
- Applicants should be encouraged to self-assess their suitability for the position and be provided with additional information about the organization and the role.



Child and Young People Participation and Empowerment

AY Institute is committed to helping children and young people develop skills in self-protective behaviors. As part of the annual review of this policy, AY Institute will informally consult with children and young people involved in its projects to gather their feedback.

Internet Safety

AY Institute recognizes that the internet, mobile phones, and other forms of information technology can be used as avenues for child abuse. However, these technologies also play a positive, informative, and creative role in a child or young person's education.

AY Institute works to educate children and young people on safe and respectful ways to use information technology. During AY Institute activities, all children and young people's use of technology is monitored and conducted in an open space.

Any indication of inappropriate activity, whether directed at a child or young person or initiated by them, must be reported to the Child Safety Officer immediately. It is the responsibility of all members of AY Institute, including students, staff (paid or volunteer), and parents, to report concerns in this area.

Drugs and Alcohol

AY Institute recognizes that the use of alcohol and drugs by staff and volunteers can impact:

- The safety and well-being of children and young people participating in projects.
- The integrity and professionalism of the projects, as well as the ability of staff and volunteers to serve as appropriate role models.

Staff and volunteers must not attend projects under the influence of alcohol or any recreational drugs. Individuals taking prescription medication that may affect their ability to perform their duties responsibly and professionally should discuss this with the Manager of AY Institute.

AY Institute acknowledges that the use, supply, and possession of recreational drugs, as well as alcohol consumption for individuals under the age of 20, is illegal. The organization also recognizes the negative impact that recreational drug and alcohol use can have on a young person's physical health, social well-being, and emotional development.

Code of Conduct

AY Institute seeks to clarify acceptable behavior to enhance the safety and well-being of the children and young people participating in its projects while also protecting staff, volunteers, and the organization.

The code of conduct must be explained and discussed with all new staff and volunteers. Each individual must read and sign the code before commencing their role.

Complaint Mechanism

All staff of AY Institute are responsible for protecting children from abuse in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Lithuania. Any suspicion of child abuse must be taken seriously and investigated, whether reported by a child, caregiver, professional, or AY Institute staff member. If a crime or a threat to a child's interests is suspected, employees must immediately take legal action.

A decision to intervene is made by a team consisting of the reporting employee, the coordinator of the relevant program, and an expert in child protection appointed by the coordinator. The decision to inform the Prosecutor's Office can only be authorized by the AY Institute Management Board. Other forms of intervention must be communicated to the Board. Additionally, AY Institute employees must offer help and support to the child and their non-offending caregivers.

If a child's health or life is in immediate danger, the employee who becomes aware of the situation must intervene without delay by informing the relevant police unit via phone and fax about the direct threat or harm to the child's health and life. All actions taken during the intervention must be documented.

If a child suffers serious harm or loses their life despite AY Institute's support, the Management Board will initiate a **Serious Incident Analysis** to assess whether all available support measures were employed and to draw conclusions for future operations.

Incident Reporting

AY Institute staff must act immediately in response to any concerning incident. In case of an incident, the organization must maintain an accurate record of:

- The date and time of the incident or disclosure.
- The date and time of the report.
- The name and role of the person to whom the concern was originally reported, along with their contact details.
- The name and role of the person making the report (if different from the above), along with their contact details.
- The names of all parties involved in the incident, including any witnesses.
- The name, age, and any other relevant information about the child who is the subject of the concern, including information about their parents, caregivers, and any siblings.
- A record of what was said or done and by whom.
- Any action taken to look into the matter.
- Any further action taken (such as a referral being made).
- The reasons why the organization decided **not** to refer the concern to a statutory agency (if applicable).

Policy Implementation, Review, and Monitoring

The Child Protection Policy of AY Institute becomes effective upon its full publication and availability to all staff. An abridged version of the policy is posted on the organization's website.

The policies and procedures outlined in this document will be formally reviewed at least every two years to ensure their effectiveness and relevance. Feedback on the policy will be gathered from staff, volunteers, children, young people attending programs, and other stakeholders.

The review will assess:

- Whether all aspects of the policy and related procedures are being successfully followed and if any modifications are necessary.
- Training needs for the coming years.
- Changes or updates in information and/or legislation related to child protection.

Proposed amendments will be presented to the Board of AY Institute for approval. If the amendments are significant, the Board will consult with Department Leaders before making a final decision. Any revisions to the policy must be communicated to all AY Institute staff.

Data Protection

AY Institute ensures that all support provided to children and their families is documented and securely stored. The organization is committed to complying with data protection laws, including those governing sensitive data. This is achieved by:

- Obtaining written and informed consent from children's parents/legal guardians regarding the processing of their personal data.
- Appointing a designated individual responsible for data protection.



- Providing data protection training for employees.
- Securing both electronic and hard-copy documentation.

Clear guidelines are in place to ensure that information is only shared with third parties, such as courts or the Prosecutor's Office, in accordance with legal requirements and interdisciplinary team protocols.

Furthermore, AY Institute values the privacy of its clients and participants and does not release their information to the media. The organization also refrains from using children's images in informational and educational materials without prior consent from their caregivers. By respecting privacy and safeguarding personal data, AY Institute aims to create a safe and supportive environment for children and families.

Parents and caregivers of children participating in AY Institute's activities have the right to receive information regarding the support provided to the child, unless such disclosure would threaten the child's well-being.

Staff members providing direct or indirect assistance or services to children are strictly prohibited from disclosing any client information obtained during their professional activities. Exceptions to this rule are clearly defined by law and the internal procedures of AY Institute.

Legal and contact person:

Gediminas Kondrackis

Email address: info@activeyouth.lt

Signature

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Gediminas Kondrackis", written over a horizontal line.