

**Ontario Vipassana Foundation
Anapana Meditation Courses For
Children (age 8-12), Teens (age 13-15) and Teens (age 16-18)**

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Introduction:

In September of 2004 there were informal policies and procedures developed for North America by the Regional Children's Course Committee. The RCCC also developed a document to be read and signed by all adults serving on Children's and Teen Courses. This document was entitled "Children's and Teen's Course Safety Guidelines" (see attached).

The RCCC based these informal policies/procedures/guidelines on the five precepts and code of discipline for dhamma workers with more explicit direction regarding protocol with children and teens. Basically the documents direct us to avoid any inappropriate physical contact, any appearance of inappropriate physical contact or even the suggestion of such.

The Children's Course Committee and the Children's Course Teacher who organize Children's and Teen Course held at the Ontario Vipassana Meditation Centre follow the informal policies/procedures/guidelines that were put in place by the RCCC.

These documents will now be used as the basis for establishing formal policies and procedures specifically for the Children's and Teen Anapana Meditation Courses conducted at the Ontario Vipassana Meditation Centre.

Policy A:

All adult servers attending Children's and Teen Meditation Courses will read and sign the "Children's and Teen's Course Safety Guidelines"

Procedure:

1. Registration will send these guidelines as email files to server applicants
2. The Children's Course Teacher is to ensure that all servers have read and signed the guidelines before the course begins and keep them on hand during the course
3. After the course the signed guidelines for each server needs to be kept on file and stored with the application of service at the centre

Policy B:

To ensure that all adult servers attending courses offered, to children and teens, will work together to keep them safe from harm while they are at the centre.

Procedure:

1. There needs to be a core group of trusted old student meditators developed who are known to the Teachers and the centre. These students will form the Children's Course Committee as well as serve on the courses
2. All servers on the children's and teen courses need to be old students established in practicing Vipassana Meditation
3. No one who is a stranger to the Teachers or the centre is to be allowed on the centre grounds during a children or teen course
4. If a server has applied and is not known then there needs to be some degree of interviewing undertaken to ensure that only suitable people are chosen
5. Any approved unknown servers will be paired with known servers while attending the course
6. Groups will be kept small. There will be two Group Leaders assigned to 5-7 students
7. Coordinators, managers and CCTs will be constantly monitoring to ensure the policy and procedures are being implemented
8. Adult servers will not be alone with a child. All children will remain in sight of more than one adult server, at all times
9. On residential courses, there will be two adult servers who stay behind with the children or teens in the evenings while others attend metta and post metta meetings
10. Every effort will be made to have AT or Teacher available to support the adult server's meditation schedule as well as available to consult with the CCTs as necessary

Policy C:

The Ontario Vipassana Meditation Centre will follow new directives received from the International Children's Course Committee (ICCC) or the Regional Children's Course Committee (RCCC) with regard to running children and teen courses at the centre

Procedure:

1. The Children's Course Committee and Children's Course Teachers will follow the most current guidelines in place for running all Children and Teen Anapana Meditation Courses unless approval is received for special circumstances.

Policy D:

Parents will be asked to sign a waiver of liability.

Procedure:

1. The waiver will be sent out with the application package. The signed waiver/s would be returned with the application and kept on file at the centre.

Policy E:

The centre will ensure that if a child is harmed in any way on centre property during a Children's or Teenager's Meditation Course that the child/youth will receive immediate medical attention and the parents will be notified of the circumstances. If appropriate the proper authorities will be notified as well.

Procedure:

1. As soon as it is known that a child/teen has been harmed the CCT will be informed. The CCT will immediately notify the centre Teachers if they are on the premises. Either the CCT or centre Teacher will notify the proper authorities depending on the circumstances.
2. The child/teen will receive immediate medical attention
3. The child/teen parents/guardian or emergency contact will be informed with regard to the circumstances that resulted in harm to their son or daughter
4. If the child/teen is under 16 and there has been a report of an incident of physical or sexual abuse then the Simcoe Children's Aid Society will be notified
5. If the teen is over 16 and there has been a report of an incident of physical or sexual abuse then the local police will be notified

Policy F:

If a child or teen while attending a Children's or Teenager's Meditation Course at the centre discloses physical, sexual or emotional abuse that has occurred or is occurring within his or her home, school or community the proper authorities, within the centre's jurisdiction, will be notified immediately

Procedure:

1. As soon as it is known that a child/teen has made a disclosure the CCT will be informed. The CCT will immediately notify the centre Teachers if they are on the premises. Either the CCT or centre Teacher will notify the proper authorities depending on the circumstances.
2. As soon as a disclosure has been made and the child is under 16 then the Simcoe Children's Aid Society will be notified
3. As soon as a disclosure has been made and the teen is over 16 then the local police will be notified

Children's and Teens' Course Safety Guidelines

The Child Safety Guidelines are set within the context of the Dhamma Workers Code of Discipline and should be followed with the same diligence to protect and preserve all participants during a children's or teens' course, as well as to preserve and protect the purity of the course and center atmosphere.

The Code of Discipline

The principles set out in the Code of Discipline have been produced to ensure a peaceful, harmonious atmosphere during courses, conducive for all (children, teens and adults) to meditate.

The basis of the code of discipline is the five precepts that anyone of any age at a course or center are asked to follow:

- not to kill
- not to steal
- not to commit sexual misconduct
- not to lie
- not to take intoxicants

The goal of the following guidelines is to further ensure the welfare of children and teens while at a children's or teens' course at either a center or non-center site and to insure that any suspicions of abuse or inappropriate conduct are responded to efficiently and effectively.

Guidance for Servers on Children's and Teens' Courses

Contact with Children

- Any one-to-one work with children should be done in full view of others.
- All responsibilities involving the custodial care of children (e.g., contact in private or semi-private areas such as bedrooms and bathrooms) should be done in full view of others, and/or in pairs of adults.
- If in exceptional circumstances one-to-one contact cannot be avoided in more private areas, others should know about and support your actions [telling people before and after the event].
- Groups of children (three to six in number) should be attended to by assigned counselors who are responsible for their care. However, in sleeping arrangements, adult counsellors should stay in a neighboring room whenever possible. If adult counsellors must sleep in the same room as the children, then the adults should only do so in pairs, not singly.

- In this Vipassana tradition, people are asked to refrain from physical contact with any other person while at meditation centers or during courses. However, it may sometimes be inevitable that physical contact between servers and children is required, such as when a child is injured or sick. Servers should ensure that any contact is for the benefit of the child and not the server and is not open to any misunderstanding.

Confidentiality

- Any information about children, such as contact details and other background information, problems and issues on a course, dietary requirements and medical needs should be kept confidential and shared only with others on a need-to-know basis.

Harm to Children

- Should there be a suspicion or an accusation that any inappropriate conduct or harm (physical, sexual or emotional) has been done to a child while on a children’s or teens’ course, either as a result of an action by a server or another child then the conducting CCT must be informed as soon as possible, 24 hours at the latest, (and notes made about what happened). The CCT should then take appropriate action which would include notifying the centre and area Teachers; following the centre policy and procedures and may involve informing the relevant civil authorities where appropriate

I understand and will follow the guidelines outlined in ‘Guidelines for Servers on Children’s and Teens’ Courses’.

Signed.....

Date.....

Print name.....