

CHARTER ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER BIRTH

Introduction

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was an historic step forward, because children were acknowledged as having their own rights. Children were no longer regarded as „not-yet-adults“, but as independent human beings and independent people entitled to care, protection, safety and the right to articulate their interests. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees development rights designed to allow children to develop their full potential.

Research on children's early development, particularly as carried out and discussed within the International Society of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Medicine (ISPPM) and the Association for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health (APPPAH), shows that children's individual and social life begins before birth. The period before, during and after birth should be seen as a continuum in which a wide variety of developmental and learning processes are interlinked and interrelated and depend on one another. The foundations for our basic feelings of security and trust are laid during this period. One of the basic requirements for successful, healthy development is a mutual relationship. Even before birth, children are independent human beings, and the rights of the child need to be extended to take account of this. The following Charter on the Rights of the Child Before, During and After Birth attempts to specify these rights – basic emotional and physical requirements that must be met if a child is to enjoy healthy development.

Rights of the Child Before, During and After Birth

1. Every child has the right to be respected as an independent person even before birth.
2. Every child is entitled to a secure prenatal relationship and bonding.
3. Every child has the right to respect for, and protection of, the continuity of its experiences during pregnancy and birth.
4. Every child has the right to consideration being paid – right from the beginning – to the emotional and psychological impacts of any medical measures undertaken, and to responsibility being accepted for them.
5. Every child has a right to assistance to ensure a loving, relationship-oriented welcome to the world that allows it to establish secure postnatal ties.
6. Every child is entitled to nutrition of adequate quality before and after birth. If possible, every child should be breastfed.
7. The rights of the child are associated with the right of future generations to be given the opportunity by society to develop their own potential as couples and as parents.
8. This right to the development of parenting skills is associated with the right of the child to responsible, sensitive and relationship-oriented parents or guardians.
9. In order to guarantee these rights, society's institutions have an obligation to support parents in performing their duties.

Clearly these rights are subject to the relative rights of others, particularly of the mother and family. Those with responsibility need to balance the relative rights with understanding of the issues involved, including those of the child.

This Charter is based on the Viennese Resolution of the International Society of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Medicine (ISPPM), on the comments made by Gaby Stroecken and Rien Verdult on prenatal bonding and children's rights, on the resolution adopted by the International Congress on Embryology, Therapy and Society 2002 in Nijmegen (Netherlands) and on the Moscow Resolution of the Russian Society for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology; these resolutions are available at www.isppm.de. The ISPPM website provides an extensive list of literature on the topic.

The Charter was adopted by the ISPPM's General Assembly on 3 June 2005 in Heidelberg.