



THE CALL TO ACTION

We call on all nurses and nursing students who may be asked to observe or assist with non-therapeutic genital cutting of children to demonstrate ethical courage by taking conscientious objector status.

If you are a nurse or nursing student in ethical distress about observing or assisting with non-therapeutic genital cutting, please contact Nurses for the Rights of the Child.

Our team has decades of experience in protecting children's rights as part of our professional nursing practice. We can provide you with practical strategies, educational resources, referrals, and support regarding conscientious objection.

You are not alone.

NURSES FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the rights of infants and children to bodily integrity. As health professionals, we specifically seek to protect non-consenting infants and children from surgical alteration of their healthy genitals.

Nurses for the Rights of the Child was founded in June of 1995 by a group of nurses who had become R.N. Conscientious Objectors to infant circumcision at St. Vincent Hospital in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Our work includes:

- Empowering, supporting, and advising nurses who want to help stop the genital cutting of infants and children, whether as conscientious objectors or as change agents.
- Advocating for babies and children by educating the public that the forced amputation of a healthy body part of a non-consenting person – whether in the name of medicine, religion, or social custom – is a human rights violation.
- Providing information to parents and parents-to-be about circumcision and the intact penis.
- Educating health professionals about circumcision, the intact penis, and the ethics of neonatal circumcision, and promoting curriculum change in the training of health professionals.
- Taking leadership in cooperating with others working in this country and abroad to promote the rights of children to bodily integrity.
- Promoting the human rights principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR WORK
AND GET INVOLVED
VISIT US ONLINE AT
WWW.CHILDRIGHTSNURSES.ORG**

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

TO NON-THERAPEUTIC
GENITAL CUTTING
OF CHILDREN



**A GUIDE
FOR NURSES, EMPLOYERS,
AND EDUCATORS**

NURSING ETHICS IN ACTION

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A NURSE, EMPLOYER, OR EDUCATOR

The Association of Women's Health Obstetric and Neonatal Nursing (AWHONN) supports nurses' rights to conscientious objection and recommends that every institution have a written policy protecting these rights and making reasonable accommodations for nurses with such objections.

Taking a conscientious objector position "...should not jeopardize a nurse's employment, nor should nurses be subjected to harassment due to such a refusal."

—The Association of Women's Health Obstetric and Neonatal Nursing, 2009

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2009), "Performing an action that violates one's conscience undermines one's sense of integrity and self-respect and produces guilt, remorse, or shame. Integrity is valuable, and harms associated with the loss of self-respect should be avoided."

The Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses in Canada (2008) states: "Ethical (or moral) courage is exercised when a nurse stands firm on a point of moral principle or a particular decision about something in the face of overwhelming fear or threat to himself or herself.

"[... T]he nurse should discuss with supervisors, [or] employers [...] what types of care she or he finds contrary to his or her own beliefs and values (e.g., caring for individuals having an abortion, **male circumcision**, blood transfusion, organ transplantation) and request that his or her objections be accommodated, unless it is an emergency situation."

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS DISPLAY ETHICAL COURAGE



ETHICAL NURSES PROTECT CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

"There is no convincing evidence that circumcision is useful or necessary in terms of prevention or hygiene. [...] Non-therapeutic circumcision of male minors conflicts with the child's right to autonomy and physical integrity."

—Dutch Royal Medical Association (KNMG), 2010

"A children's rights analysis suggests that non-consensual, non-therapeutic circumcision of boys [...] constitutes a gross violation of their rights, including the right to physical integrity, to freedom of thought and religion, and to protection from physical and mental violence."

—The International NGO Council on Violence against Children, 2012