

# Child Protection Policy

## **Purpose:**

Our policy recognises the important role and responsibility of all of our staff in the protection of children by identifying and responding to suspected child abuse or neglect and appropriately responding to concerns about the wellbeing of a child.

The interest of the child will be the paramount consideration when any action is taken in response to suspected abuse or neglect. We support the statutory agencies (Oranga Tamariki and the New Zealand Police) to investigate abuse and will report suspected cases and concerns to these agencies as per the process in this policy

## **Scope:**

All staff (including students and volunteers) have a responsibility to discuss any child protection concerns, including suspected abuse or neglect, with their supervisor/management or designated person for child protection. **Definitions:**

- **Child:** Any child or young person aged under 17 years old
- **Child protection:** Activities carried out to ensure that children are safe in cases where there is suspected abuse or neglect or are at risk of abuse or neglect
- **Designated person for child protection:** The supervisor or designated person responsible for providing advice and support to staff where they have a concern about an individual child or who want advice about child protection policy.
- **Disclosure:** Information given to a staff member by a child, parent or caregiver or a third party in relation to abuse or neglect.
- **Oranga Tamariki:** The agency responsible for investigating and responding to suspected abuse and neglect and for providing care and protection to children found to be in need.
- **New Zealand Police:** The agency responsible for responding to situations where a child is in immediate danger and for working with Oranga Tamariki in child protection work and investigating cases of abuse or neglect where an offence may have occurred.
- **Physical abuse:** any acts that may result in physical harm of a child or young person. It can be, but is not limited to; bruising, cutting, hitting, beating, biting, burning, causing abrasions, strangulation, suffocation, drowning, poisoning and fabricated or induced illness.
- **Sexual abuse:** any acts that involve forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. This may be consensual or not, and can happen within or outside the family. Most sexual abuse is done by someone the child knows and trusts. Sexual abuse can be but is not limited to:
  - i. **Contact abuse:** touching breasts, genital/anal fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetrative or non-penetrative contact with the anus or genitals, encouraging the child to perform such acts on the perpetrator or another, involvement of the child in activities for the purposes of pornography or prostitution.
  - ii. **Non-contact abuse:** exhibitionism, voyeurism, exposure to pornographic or sexual imagery, inappropriate photography or depictions of sexual or suggestive behaviours or comments.

- **Emotional abuse:** any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development. This can include:
  - i. Patterns of isolation, degradation, constant criticism or negative comparison to others. Isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child can also be emotional abuse.
  - ii. Exposure to family/whanau or intimate partner violence.
- **Neglect:** neglect is the most common form of abuse and although the effects may not be as obvious as physical abuse, it is just as serious. Neglect can be:
  - i. Physical (not providing the necessities of life like a warm place, food and clothing) ii. Emotional (not providing comfort, attention and love).
  - iii. Neglectful supervision (leaving children without someone safe looking after them)
  - iv. Medical neglect (not taking care of health needs).
  - v. Educational neglect (allowing chronic truancy, failure to enrol in education or inattention to education needs)

### Training

We are committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse through appropriate training. As part of their induction, new staff are made aware of the policy on child protection.

### Identifying child abuse and neglect

Our approach to identifying abuse or neglect is guided by the following principles:

- We understand that every situation is different and it's important to consider all available information about the child and their environment before reaching conclusions. For example, behavioural concerns may be the result of life events, such as divorce, accidental injury, the arrival of a new sibling etc.
- We understand when we are concerned a child is showing signs of potential abuse or neglect we should talk to someone, either a colleague, supervisor/manager or the designated person for children protection – we shouldn't act alone.
- While there are different definitions of abuse, the important thing is for us to consider overall wellbeing and the risk of harm to the child. It is not so important to be able to categorise the type of abuse or neglect.
- It is normal for us to feel uncertain, however, the important thing is that we should be able to recognise when something is wrong, especially if we notice a pattern forming or several signs that make us concerned.
- Exposure to intimate partner violence is a form of child abuse. There is a high rate of cooccurrence between IPV and the physical abuse of children.

### We recognise the signs of potential abuse:

- **Physical signs** (e.g. unexplained injuries, burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases)
- **Behavioural concerns** (e.g. age-inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place, eating disorders/substance abuse, disengagement/neediness, aggression)
- **Developmental delays** (e.g. small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills)

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- **Emotional abuse/neglect** (e.g. sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness and evidence of self-harm)
- The child talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes called an allegation or disclosure)

**We are aware of the signs of potential neglect:**

- **Physical signs** (e.g. looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight)
- **Behavioural concerns** (e.g. disengagement/neediness, eating disorders/substance abuse, aggression)
- **Developmental delays** (e.g. small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills)
- **Emotional abuse/neglect** (e.g. sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness and evidence of self-harm)
- **Neglectful supervision** (e.g. out and about unsupervised, left alone, no safe home to return to)
- **Medical neglect** (e.g. persistent nappy rash or skin disorders or other untreated medical issues)

**We are aware of the effects of cumulative harm:**

- Patterns of circumstances and events in a child's life which diminishes their sense of safety, stability and wellbeing
- Compounded experiences of multiple episodes or layers of neglect
- Patterns of low level care, particularly during early development
- Constant daily impact on the child can be profound and exponential, covering multiple dimensions of the child's life.

We will always act on the recommendations of statutory agencies, including Child, Youth and Family and the Police. We will only inform families/whanau about suspected or actual abuse after we have discussed this with these agencies.

When we respond to suspected child abuse or any concerning behaviour we write down our observations, impressions and communications in a confidential register. This is dated and signed. This is kept separate from our other records and access will be strictly controlled

Staff involved in cases of suspected child abuse are entitled to have support. We will maintain knowledge of such individuals, agencies and organisations in the community that provide support.

**Confidentiality and information sharing**

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We will seek advice from Oranga Tamariki and/or the Police before identifying information about an allegation is shared with anyone, other than the service manager or designated person. Staff should be aware that:

- Under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 any person who believes that a child has been or is likely to be, harmed physically, emotionally or sexually or ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived may report the matter to Child, Youth and Family or the Police and provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.
- When collecting personal information about individuals, it is important to be aware of the requirements of the privacy principles – i.e., the need to collect the information directly from the individual concerned and when doing so to be transparent about; the purposes for collecting the information and how it will be used; who can see the information; where it is held; what is compulsory/voluntary information, and that people have a right to request access to and correction of their information.
- Staff may, however, disclose information under the Privacy Act/Health Information Privacy Code where there is good reason to do so – such as where there is a serious risk to individual health and safety (see privacy principle 11/Code rule 11). Disclosure about ill-treatment or neglect of a child/young person may also be made to the Police or Oranga Tamariki under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989.

### **Child safe practice guidelines**

Staff will avoid situations where they may be alone with children, all staff should examine the opportunities or possible situations where they may be alone with children. Wherever possible an open door policy for all spaces should be used. Staff should be aware of where all children are at all times.

Staff will avoid being alone when transporting a child or young person, unless an emergency requires it. Except in an emergency, children and young people are not to be taken from our Centre, without written parental consent. (See Supervision policy and Outings and Excursion Policy).

Staff including relievers and volunteers that come into contact with children will be Police checked before commencing work and every following two years. Students on placement will be required to produce two forms of identification, one primary, and one secondary to remain on file during their placement with us. Their training providers will be contacted and expected to provide written details about their Student screening. Students will never be left alone with children or counted in staff ratios.

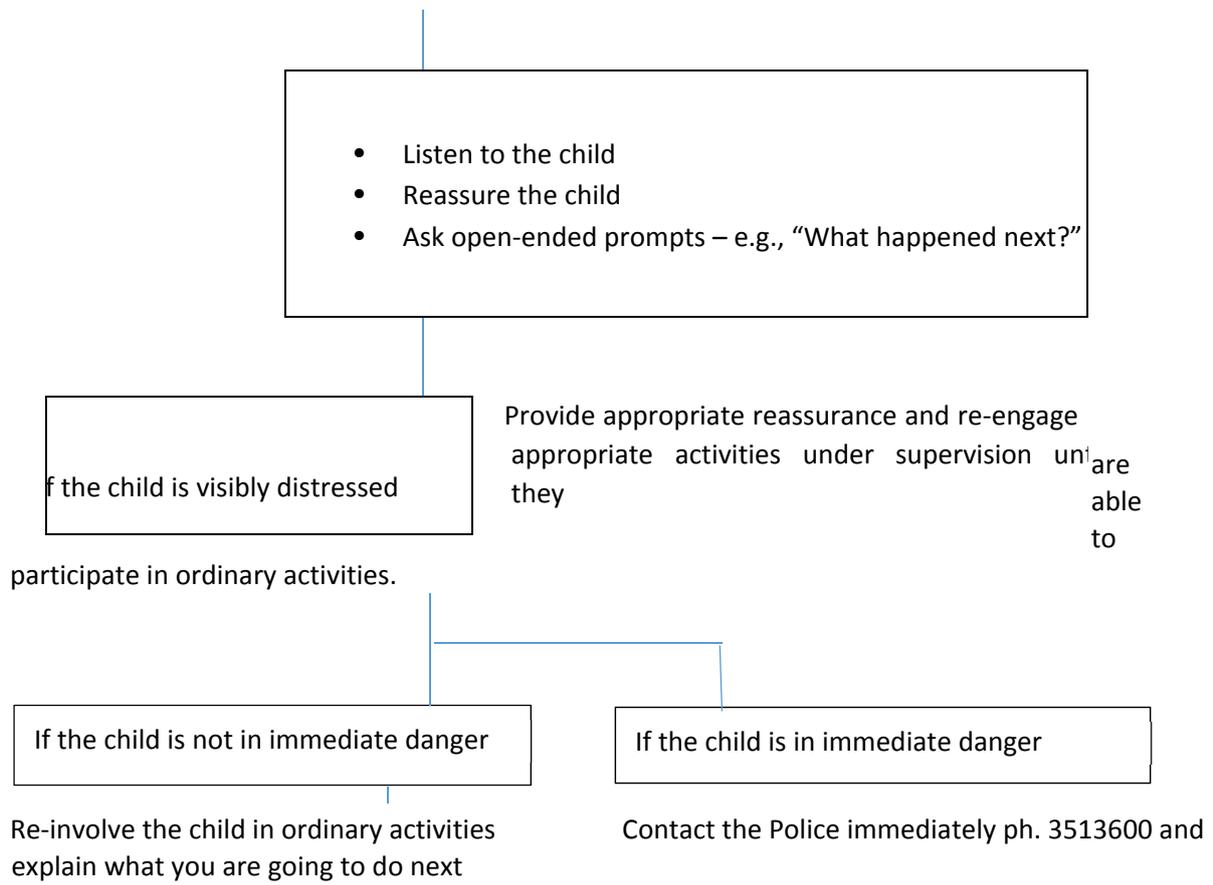
Staff will be interviewed and required to have two forms of identifications one primary, and one secondary before they are offered employment. At least two character references will be contacted prior to any position been offered. (See staff employment policy)

Visitors should be monitored at all times by staff, including volunteers and tradespeople.

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**PROCESS:**

Disclosure of abuse or neglect



**Record:**

As soon as possible formally record the disclosure.

- Word for word, what the child said
- The date, time, location and the names of any staff that may be relevant
- The factual concerns or observations that have led to the suspicion of abuse or neglect (e.g., any physical, behavioural or developmental concerns)
- The action taken by the Centre
- Any other information that may be relevant

Decision-making  
the  
designated person for child protection.

Discuss any concern with the manager/supervisor or  
— the

Notify Child, Youth and Family promptly if there is a  
Notifying authorities belief that a child has been, or is likely to be, abu  
— or neglected. Email: [cyfcallcentre@cuf.govt.nz](mailto:cyfcallcentre@cuf.govt.nz) or

Phone: 0508EDASSIST 0508 332 774.

### When an allegation is made against a member of staff

All matters involving allegations against staff need to be taken to the management team.

To ensure the child is kept safe, management will take steps to remove the staff member against whom an allegation has been made from the environment, subject to the requirements of the applicable individual employment contract and relevant employment law.

#### Disclosure/allegation of child abuse by a staff member

As per disclosure process, up to  
Decision-making

Management team to be notified

- Management to consult with Child, Youth & Family or the Police
- Management to refer to the relevant employment contract

Oranga Tamariki or management to advise employee and seek a response  
(depending on outcomes of discussions with statutory agencies.)

- Employee will be advised of their right to seek support/advice from union or other appropriate representatives
- Management to contemplate removal of employee from the programme environment, subject to the employment contract.
- Management to maintain close liaison with Oranga Tamariki or the Police



We commit not to use 'settlement agreements', where these are contrary to a culture of child protection. Some settlement agreements allow a member of staff to agree to resign provided that no disciplinary action is taken, and a future reference is agreed. Where the conduct at issue concerned the safety or wellbeing of a child, use of such agreements is contrary to a culture of child protection.

**Review:** August 2018

**Updated:** July 2019

**Chairperson:**

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