



Child Abuse Prevention Policy

Centre Goals

We are committed to protecting our children against child abuse. All staff will be familiar with and able to *implement* these policies when necessary. Staff will be educated to *recognise* and *respond* appropriately to indications of child abuse. Staff will *know* their roles and *implement* appropriate procedures especially with regard to contacting and working with child abuse protection agencies.

Staff and parents need to be *aware* of the laws and regulations and rights and responsibilities of children, staff, parents, and 'agency' personnel which relate to child abuse protection.

First Principles

The interest and protection of the child is paramount in all actions. If any person, parent or staff, has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse their first obligation after ensuring the child is in no immediate danger is to immediately advise the most senior person at the Centre *without delay*. The Centre Supervisor will be immediately notified.

All matters related to individual cases are confidential to those directly involved and should under no circumstances be discussed with other staff, parents, children, or any person in or outside the Centre. Failure of staff to comply with this policy can result in dismissal.

Full and detailed written records are to be kept (as directed by the Centre Supervisor and or the trustees) of every related discussion, act, or incident which involves the parent, child, accused, or staff member from the first instance child abuse is suspected. Staff do not assume responsibility for action or advice beyond the level of their own expertise.

Staff Training Procedures

All staff job descriptions and staff policies will include a requirement by all staff to have read and understood this policy and to accept their responsibility in implementing this. This policy will also be read by students, and volunteers as part of initial induction program for new staff.

Staff Training Outcomes

- All staff must be able to locate a copy of this policy, if asked.
- Centre Supervisors and teaching team must be able to explain common indicators exhibited by a child who has been subject to abuse.

Outside Training Opportunities

The Centre Supervisor (and where appropriate other senior staff) could be asked to obtain training, resources, and/ or advice that will enable them to carry out their role in terms of this policy; particularly that which covers:

- Understanding child abuse and indicators of child abuse.
- How to reduce the risk of child abuse in centres.
- Understanding and complying with legal obligations in regard to child abuse.
- Working with outside agencies on child abuse issues.
- Planning of environment, program, and supervision to minimise risk.
- Providing staff training and advice on child abuse policies.
- Dealing with child/parents.

Preventing the Possibility of Child Abuse in the Centre

Design

During initial planning or renovation of the Centre environment, care will be taken to ensure the risk of adults being left unobserved by others with a child or small group will be minimised.

Supervision

All children are to be within sight of the staff member responsible for them at all times and, where practical, all staff can be observed by other staff members.

Playground: Where practical, all parts of the outdoor area where children can go shall be able to be readily observed by staff supervising. The staff supervising children shall, as far as practicality, be observable by one other staff member.

Classrooms: Where practical, all parts of the indoor area where children can go shall be able to be readily observed by staff supervising. The staff supervising children shall, as far as practicality, be observed by one other staff member.

Toilets: Where practical and appropriate, a staff member should supervise children in the toilet/bathroom area. Where practical and appropriate, all parts of the toilet/bathroom area, where children can go, shall be able to be readily observed by staff supervising. The staff supervising children shall, as far as practicable, be able to be observed by one other staff member.

No child may be taken from the centre by any staff member or adult (except in emergencies) without permission of the parent and with the specific knowledge of the Centre Manager. Outside visitors are to be recorded in the reception sign in register (who, duration, and purpose) and be accompanied by a staff member at all times.

Application Screening

The Staff Application Form includes a declaration by the applicant that they have not been convicted or accused of crimes against children. Police vetting will be completed for all staff. Permission will be sought to check all previous employers and to pass information on to subsequent employers. All recent employment positions are required to be disclosed and at the discretion of the Centre Manager/Trustees and will be checked.

Trainees with little or no previous employment record in an early childhood Centre will be asked to supply character references from responsible persons as to their suitability to supervise and work with young children.

A police check will be requested through the police vetting online services. All selected applicants will be interviewed according to a carefully planned structure.

All provisional and fully registered teachers will have a police vetting completed as part of the New Zealand Teachers Council requirements.

Visitor Supervision and Limits

Parents, families, and visiting early childhood colleagues are generally welcome to be in the centre at all times and parents are particularly welcome to participate in centre activities.

The Centre Supervisor, and all staff shall ensure visitors and contractors on official business in the Centre shall not be left unsupervised and that they all sign into the visitor's book. All unrecognised visitors to the centre shall be 'challenged' by nearest senior staff member (can I help you?) to ascertain their business. Visitors without good reason to be on the premises are to be asked to leave.

No persons other than employed staff shall be given tasks, which involve nappy changing, toileting, or responsibility for supervision of children. Parents and other visitors may only be given tasks under direct supervision of a staff member.

Professional Behaviour

Limits on Touching

Whilst it is appropriate to respond to a child who initiates physical contact in seeking affection, or who needs reassurance or comfort it is not appropriate to force any form of unwanted affection or touching on a child. Touching should not be initiated to gratify adult needs.

Physical contact of children during changing or cleansing must be for the purposes of that task only and not be more than is necessary for the job. Any person who perpetrates or colludes with any sexual act on or with a child will be instantly dismissed.

Responding to Complaints

Where any person reports to a staff member any suspicions of child abuse at the centre, the staff member shall immediately notify the Centre Supervisor/Trustees. No staff member will take action alone in these matters and any action taken or discussion about a suspicion should only be after consultation with the most senior staff member or management person that can be contacted. Where appropriate, the person making the allegation will be given a copy of this policy.

When advised about an incident or allegation, the Centre Supervisor/ Trustees shall immediately investigate and shall fully, carefully, and accurately record in writing both the allegation and a diary version of the process and results of the investigation.

The Centre Supervisor/ Trustees shall where appropriate seek the assistance of Children Young Persons Service (CYPS), their families, police, or other 'professional support agencies in order to carry out a suitable and fair investigation. During the investigation priority must be given to protect the child and to

protect the rights of those involved.

Notifying an Agency

If it is clear from information or investigation that there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe of an instance of child abuse having taken place the Centre Supervisor/Trustees shall notify an appropriate outside support agency (i.e. CYPS, police, or another professional body).

Where there is some doubt that an instance of child abuse has taken place the Centre Supervisor/Trustees may determine that an independent 'mediator' should be called in to ensure that the policy has been followed and investigation is seen to have been done fairly and fully (ECC, NZCA or other professional support agencies).

When a Staff Member is Suspected of Abuse

Initial report of any incident must be written down in full as soon as possible. Where appropriate the Centre Supervisor/Trustees will discuss the incident as soon as possible with the staff member and other possible witnesses. The staff member's version of the incident(s) will be investigated before any decision is made. Where the investigation takes more than one day, the staff member may be asked to carry out alternative duties or suspended until a full investigation can be completed. Appropriate support will be accessed for the staff member.

Where there is some substantive evidence that an instance of child abuse may have taken place, an appropriate outside support agency should be contacted by Management. Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that an instance of child abuse has taken place, that staff member shall be suspended whilst an investigation occurs.

The Centre will take into account the advice of CYPS, or other support agency as to whether police will be advised unless it is clear that a criminal offense has taken place, in which case the Centre Supervisor/Management will advise the Police directly.

The parent of the child (or children) affected will be advised as soon as possible after investigations are reasonably complete, unless deemed by the Centre Supervisor/Trustees to be inappropriate.

Obligations to Staff

Whilst the protection of the child shall be paramount and the next obligation of the Centre Supervisor/Trustees shall be a full and fair investigation, it shall not be forgotten the impact to staff members this can have. Care will be taken to ensure that the presumption of innocence of those accused or implicated will be maintained until investigations are complete. Counselling and time off will be offered to staff that have been accused wrongly.

Parent Action: When Abuse in the Centre is suspected of Abuse

All suspicions or observed incidents or reports of incidents should be reported directly to the Centre Supervisor/Trustees as soon as possible, who will immediately take steps to protect the child(ren), record the report and instigate an investigation.

The parent who has made the allegation or report must not discuss this with other staff, nor the person(s)

or parents involved in the alleged abuse, nor other parents, or persons outside the Centre, until after a full and fair investigation has taken place. The parent of the child/ren affected will be advised as soon as possible after investigations are reasonably complete.

This policy will be made available to parents upon request at reception. The policy will be available at all times to all staff in a policy and procedure folder in the staff room.

When a Parent/ Caregiver is Suspected of Abuse

Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been or is subject to abuse, (but not in immediate danger) the Centre Supervisor/Trustees, will be advised and will arrange for the child to be observed and a confidential record initiated.

If it is clear from information or investigation that there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe of an instance of child abuse having taken place the Centre Supervisor/Trustees shall notify an appropriate outside support agency (i.e. CYPS, Police or other professional).

Where there is some doubt that an instance of child abuse has taken place the Centre Supervisor/Trustees may determine that an independent 'mediator' should be called in to ensure that the policy has been followed and investigation is seen to have been done fairly and fully (ECC or other professional support agencies).

When Abuse outside the Centre is suspected

Consultation/ Notification

Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been or is subject to abuse, but not in immediate danger, Management will be advised and will arrange for the child to be observed and a confidential record initiated.

Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child is in immediate danger of abuse when they leave the Centre or where an investigation or observations reveal evidence of abuse the Centre Supervisor/ Trustees shall notify the appropriate outside support agency or professional as soon as possible.

Recording of Information

All observations, after an investigation has been notified, shall be kept in writing in a confidential manner.

Advising and Dealing with Parents

If it is clear from the evidence that parent(s) are not involved as parties to the alleged abuse, Management may if appropriate, advise them in a suitable, professional and sensitive manner that an investigation has been initiated and we will take such steps as necessary to ensure that they have the support, information and are made aware of a suitable referral or support service. Note: All persons investigating or reporting are protected from civil and legal action by parents or others provided they acted in good faith.

Review and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually. After any incident or occasion in which significant elements of this policy have been implemented then this policy will be reviewed by Centre Supervisor and Trustees.