

	Policy
	Policy Category: Health & Safety
	Date: September 2019
	Policy Name: Child Protection Policy

The purpose of this operational policy is to establish the actions that are to be taken to protect children from abuse and neglect by meeting Ministry of Education Early Childhood Education Licensing Criteria HS31 and provisions of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.

For the purpose of this policy, abuse is used in the context of adult to child. This could be teachers to child or an adult (outside of the centre) to the child.

Abuse relating to child to child or child to adult is not within the scope of this policy.

Position Statements

We have an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care and are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all children. The safety and wellbeing of the child is our top priority.

We support families/whānau to protect their children.

We provide a safe environment, free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse.

Our centre is committed to work with other agencies where necessary to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and families/whānau.

Issue Outline

Child abuse and neglect is not acceptable. Children need our protection.

Prevention is always better than cure. Too many children are not cared for and protected adequately by adults.

The ECE sector has a key role to play in providing a safe environment for children, free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse and also supporting families/whānau to protect their children.

Definitions

Child Abuse is defined by the Ministry of Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki as “any child or young person that has been, or is likely to be, harmed (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived”.

Child Abuse can be:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Verbal Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect.

Neglect “is a pattern of behaviour which occurs over a period of time and results in impaired functioning or development of a child. It is the failure to provide for a child’s basic needs.

Neglect may be:

- Physical - failure to provide necessary basic needs of food, shelter or warmth.
- Medical - failure to seek, obtain or follow through with medical care for the child.
- Abandonment - leaving a child young person in any situation without arranging necessary care for them and with no intention of returning.
- Neglectful supervision – failure to provide developmentally appropriate or legally required supervision.
- Refusal to assume parental responsibility - unwillingness or inability to provide appropriate care for a child.”

From Child Matters website: www.childmatters.org.nz

Policy principles

The interest and protection of the child is paramount in all actions.

We recognise the rights of family/whanau to participate in the decision-making about their children.

We have a commitment to ensure that all staff are able to identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect and are able to take appropriate action in response.

In order for children to be safe from abuse and or neglect, both parents/caregivers and teachers need a shared understanding of what abuse is and how it can be prevented.

We are committed to supporting all teachers to work in accordance with this policy, to work with partner agencies and organisations to ensure child protection policies are consistent and high quality.

We will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.

We are committed to share information in a timely way and to discuss any concerns about an individual child with the Centre Manger, colleagues or the Team Leader.

We are committed to promote a culture where teachers feel confident that they can raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.

Detail

Competent and supported teachers

We make sure all teachers know and understand what abuse and neglect are, and how to recognise the signs (see attached table).

We also encourage our teachers to talk to someone experienced, for a different point of view, or for ideas about how to help. We also have these contacts readily displayed on our noticeboard and in newsletters:

- Parent Help – 0800 568 856
- Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki – 0508 326 459
- Are You OK – 0800 456 450 (Family Violence Information Line)
- Plunket Line on 0800 933 922.

Safety Checking of Teachers/Staff

- We conduct safety checks of all teachers/staff in accordance with MOE and Vulnerable Children’s Act requirements.

Relationships with Parents/caregivers

We will form good relationships with parents/caregivers and be aware of issues that make life extra hard for parents/caregivers (see attached examples).

We will monitor situations and offer help and support to parents /caregivers where we can.

Our centre will share with parents/caregivers of children who attend our centre our centre child protection and child abuse policies.

The Centre Manager will:

- Always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the child.
- Maintain confidentiality. Failure of teachers to comply with this policy will be regarded as serious misconduct
- Maintain and increase teacher and parental/caregiver awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse, including learning about appropriate touching.
- Carry out teacher/staff safety checking (including Police Vetting) in accordance with the Vulnerable Children (Requirements for Safety Checks of Children's Workers) Regulations 2015
- Give no persons, other than employed teachers over the age of 17 years, tasks that involve nappy changing, toileting or responsibility for the supervision of children
- Ensure that teachers and other adults visiting or working in the centre are well supported and visible in the activities they perform with children. While the centre respects the privacy of our children, teachers/staff and visitors, visibility will be given priority to ensure the safety of all concerned.
- Respond appropriately to a child who initiates physical contact in seeking affection, reassurance or comfort. It is not appropriate to force any form of unwanted affection/touching on a child. Touching should not be initiated to gratify adult needs. Physical contact during the changing or cleansing of children must be for the purpose of that task only and not be more than is necessary for the job
- Ensure no child is taken from the centre by any teacher or adult, without the permission of a parent/caregiver, except in the case of an emergency where clearance has been obtained from either the Centre Manger, or the team leader.
- Maintain appropriate records.
- Ensure the centre's procedures protect teachers/staff from unjustified allegations of abuse.
- Ensure the centre has educational and informational resources for children and adults on child abuse.

Teachers/Staff will:

- Always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the child.
- Familiarise themselves with this centre policy.
- Immediately notify the Centre Manager if they observe signs of child abuse or anyone reports to them any suspicions of child abuse of children at the centre, or a pattern of neglect or concerns is identified.
- Maintain confidentiality. Failure of teachers to comply with this policy will be regarded as serious misconduct.
- Respond appropriately to a child who initiates physical contact in seeking affection, reassurance or comfort. It is not appropriate to force any form of unwanted affection/touching on a child. Touching should not be initiated to gratify adult needs. Physical contact during the changing or cleansing of children must be for the purpose of that task only and not be more than is necessary for the job
- Never take a child from the centre without the permission of a parent/caregiver, except in the case of an emergency where clearance has been obtained from either the Centre Manager or team leader.

Alignment with Other Policies

- Personnel policies – police checks and careful employment of temporary staff, casual staff, friends of friends, volunteers.
- Outings and excursions policy.

- Information & Complaints policy.
- Child Abuse Policy.

Relevant Background (including legislation/regulation references)

Regulation 46 Health and Safety Practices standard: general (1) of the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008.

Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Centres 2008 Health and Safety practices criterion 31 and 32.

Further information can be found on: <http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/School/Traumatic-incidents-and-emergencies/MoE-STA-www.mvcot.govt.nz>

Vulnerable Children Act 2014 and associated regulations.

Impacts of Policy on Teachers, Parents and Children

Information, discussion, trusting relationships and clear procedures will strengthen the ability of teachers, parents and children to work together to adequately protect all the children who attend the centre.

Alignment with the Philosophy of the centre

This policy is aligned with the centre's philosophy.

Implications and/or Risks for the centre

Failure to protect children will not only lead to lifelong damage for children, it will also seriously damage the reputation of the centre, its staff and the reputation of early childhood centres.

Implementation

We build discussions into enrolment procedures and team meetings.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or when there is a significant change in the area of the policy topic.

Authorised:	
Date:	
Review Date:	
Consultation Undertaken:	Teachers, Staff, Board members, and local child abuse agencies.

Signs of Abuse and Neglect (Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki)

The physical and behavioural signs, symptoms and history listed below, may indicate abuse or neglect. However they are not specific to abuse or neglect. In certain situations, contexts and combinations they may indicate other conditions. All signs must be examined in the total context of the child or young person's situation.

The Child				
Consider physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect				
Recognise disclosure as a sign of abuse				
Recognise Physical Signs	Record Parent, Caregiver or family signs	Observe Behavioural Signs	Child/family Vulnerabilities	Identify Developmental Signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruises and welts • Cuts and abrasions • Scalds and burns • Fractures • Head injuries • Sexually transmitted infections • Failure to thrive and malnutrition • Dehydration • Inadequate hygiene and clothing • Poisoning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to family violence • Unrealistic expectations • Terrorising • Corrupting • Isolating • Humiliating • Dependency • Closure • Flight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggression • Withdrawal • Anxiety, fear and regression • Sadness • Overly responsible • Obsessions • Substance abuse • Suicidal thoughts/plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addictions • Mental health • ORANGA TAMARIKI history • Age of parents or child • Attachment • Disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global development delay. • Specific delays: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Motor ○ Attachment ○ Speech and language ○ Social cognitive ○ Vision and hearing ○ Unusual developmental patterns

From Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki website: www.mvcot.govt.nz

Issues in the home

Issues in the home that teachers or staff might become aware of, that might lead to abuse and neglect include:

- Parents/caregivers with money problems, being out of work
- Overcrowding or housing struggles
- Parents/caregivers with stress
- Child with special needs
- Parents/caregivers isolated from friends, family and whānau
- Parents/caregivers with a history of depression or other mental illness
- Parents/caregivers separating.

Early signs that can lead to abuse and or neglect can be;

- Parent/caregiver has a drug, alcohol or gambling problem
- Parent/caregiver does not engage with their child or has a difficult relationship with them
- Child doesn't have enough clothes on and is often cold and hungry
- Child has unexplained or changeable emotions (eg, withdrawn or depressed)
- Parents/caregivers frequently yell at, swear at or shame a child
- Child seems scared of a particular adult.