

WCS Children's Services

SAFETY - Child Protection Policy

Background

Child abuse and neglect consist of an act commission or omission that endangers or impairs a child's physical or emotional health, safety, wellbeing and development. Abuse can be a single incident or a pattern of behaviour over time and may be intentional or unintentional.

Educators may encounter a child they suspect has experienced harm or neglect. They may also suspect a child has been harmed by a person at the Service.

In the ACT, legislation requires educators over the age of 18 to report suspected harm to a child who attends the Service. It is an offense to not make a report if the mandated person is an adult and believes on reasonable grounds that a child or young person has experienced, or is experiencing sexual abuse or non-accidental physical injury. The mandated reporter is not required to prove that abuse has occurred.

If any educator suspects or believes on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is experiencing abuse or neglect, or wishes to discuss concerns about a child or young person, they should speak to the Supervisor at the Service and must telephone Child and Youth Protection Services Centralised Intake as soon as possible on 1300 556 728 (Mandated Persons line).

Policy Statement

The Service seeks to create a safe and supportive environment for the children who attend the Service and for their families. To this end, the Service ensures that processes are in place to identify harm or suspected harm to a child and that the Service's response is lawful, professional and immediate. The Policy is in keeping with the ACT Government guide: *"Keeping Children & Young People Safe – a shared responsibility"* (November 2014).

Strategies and Practices

- The Service is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for children where adults treat them with understanding, dignity and respect at all times, and listen to their concerns. The Service's Philosophy is displayed.
- The Service has a Code of Conduct for interactions with children. The Code applies to educators, work experience students and volunteers to the Service and is made available.
- This Policy is explained to educators, students and volunteers before they commence at the Service. At that time, they are given the opportunity to ask any questions needed to clarify their understanding. They are then asked to sign the Fit & Proper Person declaration.
- Child protection and child safety information is made available to parents/ guardians, educators and other interested parties.
- The Service has clear procedures for recruiting, selecting and screening suitably

qualified and experienced staff. A current Working With Vulnerable People Card (WWVP) must be produced prior to commencing work or volunteering in WCS Children's Services (or evidence that an application for the card is currently being processed for a family member – Family Day Care only).

- The Approved Provider maintains a Staff Summary Sheet which clearly indicates the expiry dates of WWVP Cards for all educators, students and volunteers. WCS management informs educators, students and volunteers that it is an offence not to notify the Service of any change in the criminal history or police information they have previously provided to the Office of Regulatory Services in obtaining their card.
- The Service provides educators with ongoing professional development in child protection, and the topic is discussed in team meetings. The Approved Provider maintains and monitors a Training and Study Record.
- An educator should avoid being alone with a child, with the exception of Family Day Care.
- Any disclosure of harm must be reported to the Child and Youth Protection Services immediately. An educator who suspects that a child may be experiencing harm or neglect must also make a report to the Child and Youth Protection Services in a timely manner. An incident report must be completed. Discussion with the Supervisor may be helpful in ensuring that correct procedures are followed.
- Any suspicion of harm to a child occurring at the Service is to be immediately reported to the Child and Youth Protection Services and the Supervisor and/or Approved Provider. An incident report must be completed.
- Educators must make a report if they believe or suspect on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is being abused or neglected. Reasonable grounds for suspecting abuse include:
 - A child or young person tells you they have experienced or are experiencing abuse,
 - Someone else advises you that a child or young person has been abused, or
 - Your own observations of the child or young person's physical condition or behaviours, or those of the parents or caregivers, lead you to believe that the child or young person has experienced abuse.
- Educators under the age of 18 may seek guidance from the Supervisor and/or Approved Provider when making a report to the Child and Youth Protection Services.
- Educators intentionally teach children Protective Behaviours, with the exception of Family Day Care educators.
- Any breach of this Child Protection Policy – action or inaction – will be investigated.
- The Service's *Child Protection Policy* is reviewed at least every two years.

Responsibilities of parents/guardians

- To report any suspicion of harm to a child occurring at the Service to the Supervisor immediately.

Links to other policies

- Relationships with Children Policy
- Students, Volunteers and Visitors Policy

Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2018

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| Regs | 84 | Awareness of child protection law |
| QA | 2.2.1 | At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard. |
| | 2.2.3 | Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect. |
| | 4.2.2 | Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships. |
| | 5.1.1 | Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included. |
| | 5.1.2 | The dignity and rights of every child are maintained. |
| | 6.1.3 | Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing. |
| | 7.1.2 | Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service. |

Sources, further reading and useful websites

Sources

- Office of Regulatory Services, www.ors.act.gov.au/ Working with Vulnerable People Check
- ACT Government Community Services (2012). *Keeping Children & Young People Safe – a shared community responsibility.*
- Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. (n.d.). *Creating safe and supportive service environments for children and young people: Child Management and Risk Strategy Toolkit.*
- Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. (2011). *Your obligations.*
<http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/bluecard/employees/yourobligations.html>
accessed 12 April 2012
- NPCAN. (n.d.). *Listening to children.*
<http://www.napcan.org.au/images/uploads/pdf/1flrxo8vzs.pdf> accessed 12 March 2012
- Dr. B. Abbey and P. Maclean, NQS - the complete system of policies, procedures and forms, www.childcarebydesign.com.au/

Further reading

- Child Safety Australia. (n.d.). *Child abuse and neglect.*
<http://www.childsafetyaustralia.com.au/community/childabuse/childabuse.htm>
accessed 12 March 2012

- Department of Communities - Child Safety Services. (2012). *Child safety services services*. <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/about-us/contact-us/child-safety-service-services> accessed 12 March 2012

Useful websites

- Australian Privacy Commission – www.privacy.gov.au
- Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian – www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au
- Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) – www.childsafety.qld.gov.au
- Queensland Police Service – www.police.qld.gov.au

Policy Review

This policy is a living document and will be monitored and reviewed as issues are identified or within 24 months. Proposed changes will be circulated and discussed by all programs and any external stakeholders for approval.

Person Responsible for Review:

Manager, Children's Services

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| Implementation Date: | 3 November 2014 | Review Date: | February 2018 |
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Modification History

| Date | Sections and/or Paragraphs | Source | Details |
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| 2015/10 | Background | | Change name from Care & Protection to Child, Youth Protective Services. |
| 2016/02 | Background; Review of whole document | Educator feedback | Addition of CYPS phone number; reword to be in line with "Keeping Children Safe" book. |
| 2018/02 | Quality Areas | Revised National Quality Standard 2018 | |

Related Documents

Refer to HR Manual –cross reference to WCS documents such as: WCS Services Guide, WCS Values and Strategic Plan.

Approved by Susan Henderson, Manager, Children's Services.



16 January 2017