

Child Protection – Policy QO134

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Ōtātara Children's Centre is committed to the protection of children. We value the right of children to be emotionally and physically safe. We believe we have a moral obligation to advocate for children, especially those in our care. This policy applies to all children's workers, visitors and clients using our service.

2. AIM

Children experience an environment where their health is promoted, their emotional well-being is nurtured, and they are kept safe from harm (Te Whāriki); and all procedures align with the Children's Act 2014.

3. PROTECTING CHILDREN

All employees of Ōtātara Children's Centre are screened for suitability and subject to a robust safety check in accordance with the Children's Act 2014 before commencing employment.

Existing employees of Ōtātara Children's Centre are safety checked every subsequent three years in accordance with the Children's Act 2014.

If, at any time, the conduct of an existing employee is called into question, the procedures outlined below under section 5.2 of this policy (Teacher suspected of / identified as having abused a child) will be strictly adhered to.

4. CHILD ABUSE

The interests and welfare of children are our prime consideration. We aim to

- identify child abuse in its many forms,
- protect children from all types of abuse,
- respond in ways that keep children safe,
- advocate for children,
- protect teachers and other adults from being suspected of child abuse, and
- give support to parents, caregivers, and whānau.

We identify four types of child abuse:

1. Physical abuse: non-accidental injuries, e.g. burns, bites, broken bones, bruises, etc., and life-threatening injuries
2. Emotional abuse: yelling, belittling, etc.
3. Sexual abuse: use of children for sexual gratification; taking advantage of power and/or children's trust.
4. Neglect: Deprivation of the necessities of life, e.g. lack of food, shelter, essential physical and medical care, supervision, nurturing, response to children's cues, etc.

5. PROCEDURE

5.1 Injured child procedure

If a child comes into the Centre with an injury, bruising, any dramatic change in behaviour, or a story indicating that they may have suffered abuse, the staff will talk to the whānau/parents about it. If the management team are satisfied with the explanation and are sure the child is safe from further injury, the cause for concern and explanation will be documented and documentation stored confidentially.

If the injury, story or change in behaviour remains unexplained or if staff are unsatisfied with the explanation, the following procedure will be followed:

- Relevant teachers and management will discuss the injury, bruising, or behaviour.
- The discussion/s will be documented, with documentation including
 - date/s
 - a body diagram indicating size, colour, and site of physical injury/ies
 - signatures of at least one teacher, one team leader, and the Centre manager
- The documentation will be stored confidentially.
- If the injury or behaviour could be the result of abuse, the appropriate agencies i.e. The Ministry of Education and Oranga Tamariki will be notified.

Notes:

- No teacher will act alone or without consultation with and support of Centre management.
- Staff members will take action as appropriate to ensure the safety of a child.
- Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.
- Staff will seek Oranga Tamariki guidance as needed.

5.2 Procedure for staff member suspected of / identified as having abused a child

- The matter will be reported to Management immediately.
- The staff member under suspicion will be suspended while the matter is investigated.
- Outside assistance from professional agencies will be sought (see Formal Complaints Policy and Procedure).
- The family will be notified.
- The staff member concerned will be offered counselling with EAP, the EIT counselling service.
- The family will be encouraged to engage in counselling.
- The MoE, the EIT People and Culture Director, and the Executive Director Student and Academic Services will be notified.
- Teaching Council guidelines for reporting will be followed.

5.3 Procedures practiced by teachers to protect themselves

- Maintain high standards of behaviour at all times.
- Position themselves to be as visible as possible when working in 'high risk' areas (toileting and sleeping areas particularly).
- Keep working alone with children to a minimum.

- Have contact information for union and/or appropriate agencies available for guidance and support.
- Have at least two staff members scheduled to work in the Centre whenever children are attending
- Ensure at least two staff members will accompany children on walks and excursions outside the Centre.
- Ensure two staff members will accompany children taken to the Health Centre.
- Adhere to the guidelines set out by and with regard to the Children's Act 2014 and the MoE.

6. INFORMING PARENTS/CAREGIVERS/WHĀNAU OF SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE OR INTENT TO REPORT

Parents, caregivers, and whānau have the right to be informed about their child/ren. However, their right to be informed **must** be balanced with keeping the child safe from further abuse and the safety of staff.

Centre Management reserves the right to consult with Oranga Tamariki or other specialist agencies to seek advice **before** informing parents/caregivers/whānau of suspected abuse.

The Child Protection policy, Open Door policy and Custodial Rights policy are available to parents/caregivers/whānau in the foyer of the Centre.

7. TEACHER TRAINING

Teachers of Otatara Children's Centre will attend workshops and/or training sessions on induction and at least two yearly thereafter to ensure that they maintain and increase awareness of appropriate practices when dealing with suspected child abuse victims. Training will cover topics such as

- recognition of signs and symptoms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect,
- how to respond when abuse is suspected,
- how to respond to children when they talk of abuse, and
- how to recognise and deal with feelings.

New staff are required to familiarise themselves with the Centre's Child Protection Policy and Procedure.

8. SAFETY FOR TEACHERS

- There will be a minimum of two staff members in the Centre at **all times** that children are present. Until all children are picked up, a minimum of two staff members will remain.
- Late-pick-up children will be kept **within** the Centre until a person authorised to collect the child arrives. The Child Not Collected Procedure (QS180) will be followed.
- If an unsafe situation arises, the Police (111) and EIT Security (777) will be called.
- If there is a need to involve outside agencies, a report outlining the incident and actions taken will be written by the following day. Copies will be sent to the Executive Director Student and Academic Services and the MoE.
- Ōtātara Children's Centre EIT will refuse entry to any person who
 - because of their state of physical or mental health, may cause harm to themselves or others;
 - is suspected or has been convicted of abusing others; or

- in guiding or controlling a child, has subjected the child to solitary confinement, immobilisation, or deprivation of food, drink, warmth, shelter, or protection.

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