

Child Protection Policy (including Child Abandonment)

Aim

The centres approach to child protection is based on the following principles:

- Children have the right to feel safe, secure and under the protection of responsible, caring, trustworthy adults at all times.
- Children will be respected and in no way degraded, endangered, exploited, intimidated or harmed psychologically or physically.
- Warm words and loving touch are basic needs throughout life. The loss of spontaneous affection would be detrimental to both children and Educators.
- Physical contact is part of the nurturing of children and helps create and sustain trusting relationships and add to feelings of security.

Informing families about our policies and procedures on child protection

The centre will inform the families that they have access to our policies and procedures regarding child protection. We welcome comments and feedback from all families and Educators regarding our policies and procedures.

Posters will be displayed in our common areas and near sign in/out books informing families that they have access to all of the centre's policies and procedures.

Educators awareness of their responsibilities in relation to child protection (Read in conjunction with annual child protection review).

Strategies for Educators and child protection

Educators in children's services can be open to allegations of reportable conduct unless care is taken to implement protective strategies for Educators and children.

It is the responsibility of the centre's Nominated Supervisor to carefully monitor the adequacy of the supervision of children throughout the day and ensure that the following strategies are implemented:

- Individuals or groups of children are not to be permitted to be withdrawn into areas where they are not visible by other Educators, or taken into rooms that can be locked.
- Permanent and temporary Educators are to be directed to ensure that they at all times remain readily accessible and within the visibility of other Educators while with the children.
- Students and volunteers are to be directed to ensure that they are never alone with children in a direct, un-supervised capacity.
- Casual Educators are directed to ensure they are not alone with children in a direct, un-supervised capacity until they have received successful employment screening.
- Casual Educators are to at all times remain readily accessible and within the visibility of other Educators while with the children.
- While there is a child on the premises of a service, there is to be a minimum of 2 Educators on the premises. It is the responsibility of the Nominated Supervisors to collaborate with the Keyorris PTY LTD HR team to ensure that rosters meet this requirement and it is the responsibility of **all** Educators to ensure this requirement is upheld. During Before School Care low numbers only one Educators will be in the service. There will be external professionals on site.
- Parents are to be informed of the procedures Educators use to toilet children.
- Parents should be made aware that it may be necessary to physically restrain an out of control child who may be compromising the safety of him/herself, other children or Educators, or to isolate the child from others for short periods of time.
- Up-to-date developmental records on all children are to be kept. Relevant conversations with parents that may relate to a child's behaviour change (e.g. parents separating, new baby in the family, moving house etc.) are to be noted in the developmental record.
- Educators should be aware of their own level of tolerance and stress factors and acknowledge that there may be some children that are found to be more difficult to relate to than others.
- Educators should work with parents to develop and record appropriate procedures for behaviour management.

Who and what is a mandatory reporter?

Mandatory reporters are required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities.

Mandatory reporters are people who deliver the following services, wholly or partly, to children as part of their professional work or other paid employment, and those in management positions in these services:

- **Health care** — registered medical practitioners, specialists, enrolled and registered nurses, registered midwives, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, psychologists, dentists and other allied health professionals working in sole practice or in public or private health practices.
- **Welfare** — registered psychologists, social workers, caseworkers and youth workers.
- **Education** — teachers, counsellors, principals,
- **Children’s services** — child care workers, family day carers and home-based carers.
- **Residential services** — refuge workers, community housing providers.
- **Law enforcement** — police.
- **Disability services** – disability support workers and personal care workers.

On 1 March 2020, mandatory reporter groups in NSW expanded to also include:

- A person in **religious ministry** or a person providing religion-based activities to children (e.g. minister of religion, priest, deacon, pastor, rabbi, Salvation Army officer, church elder, religious brother or sister)
- **Registered psychologists** providing a professional service as a psychologist to adults.

In NSW, mandatory reporting is regulated by the [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#) (the Care Act) and mandatory reporters are guided by the NSW [Mandatory Reporter Guide](#).

Professional judgement should be used in deciding whether concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of an unborn child or a young person warrant a report to the [Child Protection Helpline](#).

Legislation requires that mandatory reporters continue to respond to the needs of the child or young person, within the terms of their work role, even after a report to the Child Protection Helpline has been made (s.29A of the [Care Act](#)).

There are now a variety of ways you can [make a report](#) to the Child Protection Helpline if you suspect risk of significant harm.

Acts of reportable conduct can occur in our society within all cultural, occupational and socio-economic groups.

NSW	What is to be notified?	Maltreatment types for which it is mandatory to report
	A belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person has experienced or is experiencing sexual abuse or non-accidental physical injury; and the belief arises from information obtained by the person during the course of, or because of, the person's work (whether paid or unpaid)	Physical abuse Sexual abuse Neglect Emotional Abuse

Indicators of Abuse

There are many indicators of child abuse and neglect. The following is a guide only. One indicator on its own may not imply abuse or neglect. Each indicator needs to be considered in the context of other indicators and the child’s circumstances.

General indicators of abuse and neglect

- Marked delay between injury and seeking medical assistance.
- History of injury.
- The child gives some indication that the injury did not occur as stated.
- The child tells you someone has hurt him/her.

- The child tells you about someone he/she knows who has been hurt.
- Someone (relative, friend, acquaintance and sibling) tells you that the child may have been abused.

Indicators of Neglect in children:

- Poor standard of hygiene leading to social isolation.
- Scavenging or stealing food.
- Extreme longing for adult affection.
- Lacking a sense of genuine interaction with others.
- Acute separation anxiety.
- Self-comforting behaviours, e.g. rocking, sucking.
- Delay in development milestones.
- Untreated physical problems.

Indicators of Neglect in parents and caregivers

- Failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical attention, hygiene or leaving the child inappropriately without supervision.
- Inability to respond emotionally to the child.
- Child abandonment.
- Depriving or withholding physical contact.
- Failure to provide psychological nurturing.
- Treating one child differently to the others.

Indicators of Physical Abuse in children

- Facial, head and neck bruising.
- Lacerations and welts.
- Explanations are not consistent with injury.
- Bruising or marks that may show the shape of an object.
- Bite marks or scratches.
- Multiple injuries or bruises.
- Ingestion of poisonous substances, alcohol or drugs.
- Sprains, twists, dislocations.
- Bone fractures.
- Burns and scalds.

Indicators of Physical Abuse in parents and caregivers

- Direct admissions from parents about fear of hurting their children.
- Family history of violence.
- History of their own maltreatment as a child.
- Repeated visits for medical assistance.

Indicators of Emotional Abuse in children

- Feeling of worthlessness about them.
- Inability to value others.
- Lack of trust in people and expectations.
- Extreme attention seeking behaviours.
- Other behavioural disorders (disruptiveness, aggressiveness, bullying).

Indicators of Emotional Abuse in parents and caregivers

- Constant criticism, belittling, teasing of a child or ignoring or withholding praise and affection.
- Excessive or unreasonable demands.
- Persistent hostility, severe verbal abuse, rejection and scape-goating.

- Belief that a particular child is bad or “evil”.
- Using inappropriate physical or social isolation as punishment.
- Exposure to domestic violence.

Indicators of Sexual Abuse in children

- They describe sexual acts.
- Direct or indirect disclosures.
- Age inappropriate behaviour and/or persistent sexual behaviour.
- Self-destructive behaviour.
- Regression in development achievements.
- Child being in contact with a suspected or know perpetrator of sexual assault.
- Bleeding from the vagina or anus.
- Injuries such as tears to the genitalia.

Indicators of Sexual Abuse in parents, caregivers of anyone else associated with the child

- Exposing the child to sexual behaviours of others.
- Suspected of or charged with child sexual abuse.
- Inappropriate jealousy regarding age appropriate development of independence from the family.
- Coercing the child to engage in sexual behaviour with other children.
- Verbal threats of sexual abuse.
- Exposing the child to pornography.

What is domestic and family violence?

Domestic or family violence occurs when one person in a “relationship” uses violent or abusive behaviour to control another.

The behaviour which may be classified as domestic or family violence includes:

- Physical abuse.
- Damage to property.
- Sexual abuse.
- Verbal abuse.
- Harassment or intimidation.
- Financial abuse, or
- Threatening any of the above.

Domestic violence does not just occur between spouses.

- Spousal — including defector, biological parents of a child or same sex couples.
- Intimate personal — two people in an established relationship (does not have to be sexual).
- Family — related by blood or marriage, or culturally related.
- Informal care — unpaid carer who assists with day to day living.

Children’s issues

Exposure to domestic violence has a profound and long-term effect on children.

Recent research indicates that children between 0 - 4 yrs. show measurable neurological delays in brain development when witnessing violence, and the psychological effects are the same as if they had directly experienced the violence themselves. This is the age where we normally assume children don’t know what is happening. In fact, infants show clear disturbances in response to spousal violence from at least six weeks of age.⁶

Child witnesses of domestic violence are found to develop post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms in the same way as child victims of war or natural disasters. That is, they are more likely to have dreams and recurring memories related to the event, show hyper-vigilance, sleep disturbances, psychosomatic disorders, withdrawal and anxiety, and have a lower level of cognitive performance.

Other **behavioural indicators** can include:

- Nervousness and anxiety.
- Withdrawn behaviour.
- Adjustment problems, few interests and poor school performance.
- Enuresis (bed wetting).
- Psychosomatic illnesses (asthma, stomach aches, headaches etc.).
- Excessive cruelty to animals.
- Aggressive behaviour and language.
- Pseudo-maturity.
- Boys imitating aggressive behaviours, bullying/ abusing their mothers.

Documentation

It is essential that the centre maintains well-kept records to prepare and support its ability to make a report. Ensure that you have procedures that outline the purpose and format of record keeping, the retention of records for appropriate periods and the procedure for making a report.

When notifying, it is important to have as much information as possible. The operator will ask for the following information;

Details of the child or young person and family composition:

Child's Name:
 Child's DOB:
 Child's Address:
 Phone:

Siblings:

Natural Mother:
 Natural Father:
 Address:
 Phone:

CALLERS DETAILS:

Name:
 Position:
 Address:
 Phone:
 Fax:

CALLER'S CONCERNS/REASON FOR CALL:

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- Has anything occurred that has prompted you to call today?
 - Does the caller have a concern for the immediate safety of the child or young person? If yes, why?

Notification of Abuse

When a mandatory reporter has responsible suspicion of abuse, they need to contact the Helpline and provide them with the necessary details. It is advisable to have all documentation needed available at the time of the call to ensure that all information can be given at once.

The phone number for mandatory reporters is:

NSW	<p>Child Protection Helpline: 132 111 (TTY: 1800 212 936).</p> <p>Website: https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/</p> <p>Email: Child Protection Reports childprotection@nsw.gov.au</p>
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It is important that when making a notification that the notifier asks the following questions in relation to notification;

- Name of person you spoke to.
- What the next step in the process is to be.
- What confirmation will be sent to confirm the report has been made.
- Is there any further action you as the notifier need to take?

Notification of those involved in Children's Services

A situation may arise where someone involved in the provision of care for children in a children's service has witnessed, or has suspicion of another person involved in the provision of care for children in a children's services, of being the one that is abusing children. The same definition of abuse applies to those involved in children's services as they do for children suspected of abuse outside the service.

- Any person involved in the service is a mandatory reporter if they suspect someone involved in the service of abusing children. Any incident involving another person involved in the service must report the incident or suspicion to their State or Territory Authority.
- The same details must be provided as previously listed.
- Your concerns should be raised with the service Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor as part of the process of notification.
- Each service needs to develop a written procedure to ensure that Educators are aware of the alternatives if it is the service Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor who is the person that is being notified. ALL Educators are mandated to report suspicion of abuse even if it involves the service Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor.
- As well as making the notification, the service should contact their State or Territory Authority Adviser from the Department to inform them of the incident as it may also be a breach of the regulations and need to be investigated as a licensing matter.

Confidentiality

It is important that any notification remains confidential; as it is vitally important that no confirmation of any allegation can be made until the matter is fully investigated.

Procedural Fairness

The investigation and decision-making processes that are in place are to ensure the safety and well-being of children and employees.

- The centre will act fairly, confidentially and without bias towards any allegation and subsequent investigation. All investigations will be carried out or determined by someone deemed not to have a conflict of interest concerning the case. All investigations will be carried out without undue delay, with the person subject to the investigation given an opportunity to respond to the allegation.
- The rights of each employee against whom an allegation is made will be paramount.
- Throughout the investigation, support will be offered to the employee. The employee also has a right to have support/independent person present during any meetings or interviews held as part of the investigation. This person may be a Union Representative or someone of the employee's choice.
- This will be offered by the Nominated Supervisor and will be arranged if the employee so wishes.
- All persons involved in the investigation are bound by confidentiality. All parties will be informed and reminded by this requirement. Any breach of confidentiality by any persons will be subject to disciplinary action under the Centre Discipline Policy.
- The outcome of each investigation will be supported by documentation and records taken during the course of the investigation.
- Any employee or parent dissatisfied with the process of the investigation or the outcome has a right to appeal or review. Appeals/reviews can be lodged internally with the Nominated Supervisor. The Educators /care provider also has the right to lodge a complaint with the State and Territory Authorities.

- Nominated Supervisor may consult with the State and Territory Authorities should it be necessary to undertake disciplinary action arising from an investigation. Any disciplinary action will be the responsibility of the Nominated Supervisor.
- In the event that, after thorough investigation, it is concluded the employee is innocent of any inappropriate behaviour relating to the allegation, all parties will be informed in writing of this finding. The employee will be re-instated to their position held prior to the allegation. All team and colleagues of the employee will be informed of the outcome and the centre will offer team building support if required.

Documentation and records

All documentation regarding allegations, investigations and notifications of suspected acts of reportable conduct (including those made to the State and Territory Authorities) are strictly confidential. Files created to maintain this information will be kept indefinitely and confidentially with access restricted to the Directors/Coordinator. These files will be kept in the “Restricted Access” area of the Centre Records.

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for keeping confidential records and documentation relating to the child/ren about whom an allegation is made on the premises while the child/ren remains enrolled. These records will be kept in a separate file in a locked filing cabinet accessible by the centre Directors/Coordinator. At no time will the person who is the subject of the allegation be named in the child’s records.

Helping the Child

When a child tells you that they have been abused, the child may be feeling scared, guilty, ashamed, angry and powerless. You, in turn, may feel a sense of outrage, disgust, sadness, anger and sometimes disbelief.

However, it is important for you to remain calm and in control of your feelings in order to reassure the child that something will be done to keep him or her safe.

Things you can do to show your care and concern for the child:	You will not be helping the child if you:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Listen carefully to what the child is saying. ➤ Acknowledge that it is hard to talk about such things. ➤ Tell the child that you believe them and taking them seriously. ➤ Make it clear that whatever has happened or happens is not the child’s fault and that the child is not bad. ➤ Tell the child that you know that adults sometimes do the wrong thing and that this has also happened to others. ➤ Believe, validate and support the child. ➤ Control your expressions of panic or shock. ➤ Reassure the child that they did the right thing telling you (many abusers threaten children to prevent disclosure). ➤ Tell the child honestly that you have a legal duty to tell someone so that they can help stop the abuse. ➤ Record details of the conversation, any visible injuries and any other observations you have made. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Avoid or reject them, you might be the only other significant adult in his or her life. ➤ Investigate further and inquire into the details of the abuse. This should be left to an interviewer skilled in asking such questions. ➤ Press for details beyond those that the child freely wants to tell you. Your role is to listen to what the child wants to tell you and not to conduct an investigation. ➤ Make promises to the child that you cannot keep, e.g. promising not to tell anyone. ➤ Seek a medical examination or treatment unless it is an emergency or there are serious health risks to the child. ➤ Pressure the child to show you injuries that are covered by clothing. ➤ Confront the parents or guardians or the alleged perpetrator. This may place the child at further risk e.g. parents may threaten the child not to disclose and/or remove the child from a place of safety.

All Educators, volunteers and students are informed of, and follow the centre’s policies and procedures on child protection.

The centre has a commitment to recruiting suitable Educators/care providers for employment/registration in its children's services. The recruitment process is to ascertain a preferred applicant's suitability for a position through detailed questioning during interviews, thorough reference checking, and pre-employment screening.

Before employment or placement in the case of students and volunteers all Educators, volunteers and students will be inducted into the centre. The induction will include Child Protection. This induction includes:

- All Educators are required to complete AFP Working with Children Check prior to employment.
- Educators, volunteers and students are to read the child protection policy.
- Educators, volunteers and students are to be familiarised with the centre's child protection procedures.
- Educators, volunteers and students are to sign that they have been inducted and are aware of the centre's child protection policy.
- All Educators including ancillary Educators (centre cooks and administration) will attend accredited Protective Behaviours and/or relevant Child Protection courses, within their first year of employment.

Familiar Educators are to know the particular protection needs of children in their care

(Read in conjunction with annual child protection review).

In the case of Educators needing to know particular protection needs of children in their care, the director and Educators will have a formal documented confidential meeting. In this meeting the director and Educators will use the template (located with this policy) to identify the needs of the child. The Confidentiality Policy will be required to remind Educators of the importance of such sensitive information. Confidentiality Policy located with this policy.

Educators will be receptive to information families provide about their child and link this information with their own observations and centre policies to promote the protection of each child (Read in conjunction with annual child protection review).

It is important for Educators at all times to be sensitive to the practices of families of culturally diverse or indigenous backgrounds, however, this child protection policy must be adhered to. The processes and procedures within this policy attempts to allow for the individual differences of families.

- Up-to-date developmental records on all children are to be kept. Relevant conversations with parents that may relate to a child's behaviour change (e.g. parents separating, new baby in the family, moving house etc.) are to be noted in the developmental record.
- Educators should work with parents to develop and record appropriate procedures for managing toilet practices and behaviour management.
- Parents should be made aware that it may be necessary to physically restrain an out of control child who may be compromising the safety of him/herself, other children or Educators, or to isolate the child from others for short periods of time.

Educators and Family Relationships

The Nominated Supervisor will encourage all Educators to keep separate their private and professional roles. Counselling of Educators by the Nominated Supervisor regarding confidentiality and preferential treatment may be required. When a relationship is developed with the families of the children enrolled, confidentiality and objectivity must be maintained. It is the responsibility of the Nominated Supervisor to ensure there is a clear understanding of the difference between personal and professional roles by both parties in such cases.

- **The centre is open to referrals from support agencies and works with them to develop programs for children with protection needs** (Read in conjunction with annual child protection review).
The centre is open to referrals from government departments and community agencies, to support child protection and strengthen parenting competencies and confidence. We will endeavour to:
Enhance family, child and youth health and wellbeing.
- Prevent child abuse and neglect.
- Support families through major life transitions and/or crisis
- Develop a protection needs plan.

Extension of Licensed Numbers

An extension of the licensed numbers of the service will not normally be permitted except in the case of an emergency. In the case

of an emergency the consent of the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority ACECQA will be sought to extend the license of the centre provided it is deemed that the Educators are able to maintain the safety and quality of the program.

Employee reportable conduct

For information in relation to educator inappropriate conduct towards to children and the reporting requirements please refer to Keyorris HR Policies and Procedures – Child Protection.

Legislative Requirements

- Education and Care services National Law Act 2011
- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority
- Public Health Act 1993
- Occupational Health & Safety Act 1989
- Jurisdiction Responsible authority Website
- NSW Office for Children, Youth and Families support - Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services www.dhcs.nsw.gov.au/ocyfs

Who is affected by this policy?

- Children and Families, including Guardians
- Educators and Management

Sources and further reading:

- <http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/> National Child Protection Clearing House retrieved
- <http://www.napcan.org.au/> National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect retrieved
- <http://www.unisa.edu.au/childprotection/> Australian Centre for Child Protection retrieved
- <http://www.community.nsw.gov.au> June 2016

Review: This policy will be reviewed annually. The review will be conducted by:

- *Management and Employees*
- *Interested Parties (Including Families, NSW Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate Department of Education and communities, ACECQA etc.*

Last Reviewed: August 2020