

	<b>Policy</b>
	<b>Policy Category: HEALTH AND SAFETY</b>
	Date Created: November 2016
	<b>Policy Name: Child Abuse Policy</b>

The purpose of this operational policy is to ensure that there is a procedure for responding to suspected child abuse and in so doing meeting Licensing Criteria HS31 and provisions of the Children’s Act 2014.

For the purpose of this policy, abuse is used in the context of adult to child. This could be staff 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 Statement

Child abuse and neglect is not acceptable. Children need our protection. Where protection is not adequately provided by the adults responsible for the child, others need to step in to ensure the child receives adequate protection.

The safety and wellbeing of the child is our top priority when investigating suspected or alleged abuse.

We support the roles of the New Zealand Police (the Police) and Oranga Tamariki in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected/alleged abuse to these agencies.

## Issue Outline

Not all children have the support and protection of a trusted adult.

Children that are abused or neglected need adults that can act on their behalf and keep them safe from harm.

Adults who care for children need to know how to respond to a child if the child discloses abuse or when there are concerns raised from others about abuse or neglect.

## Definitions

**Child Abuse** is defined by 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.

**Child 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](http://www.childmatters.org.nz)

<https://www.childmatters.org.nz/insights/what-is-child-abuse/what-is-child-abuse/>

Our centre staff undertakes documented efforts (i.e. records of professional training undertaken on the subject and/or information shared amongst staff or sought from agencies, advice sought and received, or other efforts undertaken) to gain an understanding of child abuse and neglect as defined by Oranga Tamariki.

The centre will review this policy every three years and share information about centre practices with parents, as per HS31 of the Licensing Criteria.

## Policy principles

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

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

We have a commitment to ensure that all staff are able to take appropriate action in response to suspected abuse situations.

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 colleagues or the Centre Manager.

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

## Detail

### Signs of abuse and neglect

Signs that a child's safety and wellbeing is in danger include:

- child tells someone they have been abused (e.g. have been hit, touched or are frightened)
- baby or child with unexplained or untreated injuries
- anxiety, fear or aggression

Our centre will take urgent action if there are signs of abuse and neglect. We tell staff and parents to trust their instincts and act immediately. We will follow the 'Child Abuse Process' (attached).

### **Allegations or concerns about staff**

When a staff member is suspected, the same processes apply. Our centre manager will suspend a staff member under suspicion until a full investigation can be completed. The Ministry of Education will be informed of any instance of allegation or concern.

### **Confidentiality and information sharing**

The Privacy Act 2020 and the Children's Act 2014 allow information to be shared to keep children safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated. Under the Children's Act, any person who believes that a child has been, or is likely to be, harmed physically, emotionally or sexually or ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived may report the matter to Oranga Tamariki or the Police and, provided that the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

Please note the ECC recommends that all instances of suspected abuse be reported to Oranga Tamariki. If staff are in doubt, the decision to report should be referred to the Manager or Team Leader for a final decision. In making this decision to report or not, the staff will need to be able to show that the decision they made was a reasonable one based on the information they have or should have asked for (including physical, behavioural and anecdotal). In addition, putting aside potential bias, they should consider whether a reasonable person in their shoes would have come to a different view and suspected potential child abuse. Failure to exercise a decision to this high standard potentially places child wellbeing at high risk. ECC will be available to assist if you are or your staff need urgent assistance with this matter. Call 0800 742 742 option 5 or 3.

### **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 Protection 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

Child Protection

Health and safety practices criterion 31

A process for the prevention of child abuse is implemented, and a procedure for responding to suspected child abuse is followed when required.

Health and Safety practices criterion 32

All practicable steps are taken to protect children from exposure to inappropriate material (for example, of an explicitly sexual or violent nature).

See Ministry of Education child abuse information on:

<http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/School/Traumatic-incidents-and-emergencies/MoE-STA-CYFProtocolForReportingActualOrSuspectedChildAbuseNov09Amendment-3-2015.pdf>

Children's Act 2014 and associated regulations.

## Impacts of Policy on Staff, Parents, Children

Clear procedures will strengthen the ability of staff, parents, and other agencies to adequately respond to signs of abuse and or neglect.

## Alignment with the Centre Philosophy

This policy is aligned with the centre's philosophy.

## Implications and/or Risks

Failure to correctly identify and respond to abuse and or neglect can be harmful to the wellbeing of the child and their family/whanau. 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 staff trainings/meetings.

## Review

Review annually or when there is a significant change in the area of the policy topic.

<b>Authorised:</b>	Vikki Cooper
<b>Date:</b>	August, 2024
<b>Review Date:</b>	Term 1, 2025
<b>Consultation Undertaken:</b>	ECC, Staff hui