

Child Protection Policy

Rationale

We have an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care is upheld and protected. The Centre is committed to protect our children against child abuse by providing a safe and healthy environment.

Centre staff recognise the following definitions and signs of child abuse

The definitions are as follows:

- **Family violence** – represents a serious abuse of power within a family, trust or dependency relationship. It undermines the basic rights of people who, because of their gender, age, disability or dependence, are most vulnerable to abuse.
- **Physical abuse** – is any act or acts which result in inflicted injury to a child or young person. Injury may be deliberately inflicted or unintentional result of rage. Whatever the cause the result for the child is physical abuse.
- **Sexual abuse** – is any act or acts which results in exploitation of a child or young person, whether consensual or not, for the sexual gratification of a parent or other person and may be done by adults or other children or young persons.
- **Emotional abuse** – any acts or omissions by the parent and/or caregiver which result in impaired psychological function and/or emotional functioning and/or development of a child or young person which may be expressed as anxiety, withdrawal, aggression, or depression or delayed development.
- **Neglect** – any acts or omissions by a parent and/or caregiver which results in impaired physical functioning, injury, or development of a child or young person such as persistent hunger, thirst or malnutrition, inadequate clothing, inadequate hygiene or living conditions.

The signs are as follows:

- **Disclosure**
- **Physical signs** – bruises and welts, cuts and abrasions, scalds and burns, fractures, head injuries, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, non-organic failure to thrive, malnutrition, dehydration, hygiene, poor circulation, poisoning, suffocation.
- **Behavioural signs** – aggression, withdrawal, specific delay (speech, motor, vision, social and cognitive) deviant development, precocious development.
- **Family signs** – behaviours within families, unrealistic expectations, terrorising, oppression, inappropriate disciplining, corrupting, isolation, rejecting, humiliation, neglect.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles when cases of child abuse or neglect are suspected:

- At all times the welfare of the child is of paramount importance.
- All matters are to be kept confidential to those involved and should under no circumstances be discussed with any other person in or outside the Centre.
- Any child suspected of suffering from abuse must receive prompt attention.
- At all times children will be safeguarded against the possibility of child abuse.
- To believe what the child tells you and what you see rather than what adults say.
- To understand child abuse and neglect is often not recognised unless you see/or talk to the child.
- To be aware that severity of a sign does not necessarily equate with the severity of the abuse. Severe, potentially fatal injuries are not always visible. Severe emotional impacts of abuse may only appear in the longer term.
- To understand that if a situation appears to justify removing a child to a place of safety, it also justifies urgent specialist assessment.
- Staff will seek competent specialist advice.
- To understand that neglect is potentially as fatal as physical abuse. It may also be a precursor to other forms of abuse. It must be treated seriously.
- Be aware of explanations that do not match the signs. People you talk too will not necessarily tell you the truth.
- To understand that child abuse and neglect are not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture. To keep an open mind.
- To be aware that there are few absolute signs of abuse or neglect. All signs must be considered within the wider situation of the child and family/whānau.
- To understand that culture is no excuse for abuse or neglect. Be sure you seek sound cultural advice. The best people to challenge culturally unsound excuses for abuse are respected and authoritative members of that particular culture.
- To know a child's behaviour is no excuse for abuse or neglect. Children may be described as difficult, but abusive behaviour is the responsibility of the adult perpetrator regardless of the stimulus provided by the child.
- To understand that a parent or caregiver's stress or deprivation is no excuse for abuse or neglect. Such explanations may help to explain the context in which abuse or neglect occurred, but abusive behaviour is the responsibility of the adult perpetrator.
- To beware of blaming, justification and rationalisation as excuses for abuse or neglect.
- The YMCA Central supports the role of Child Youth and Family in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected abuse to this department.

Training and Education

All staff will be familiar with the Child Protection Policy and maintain awareness of how to recognise, respond and prevent abuse and discuss their understanding of it with the Manager during the induction process. All staff will receive a copy of this policy.

The management of the YMCA Community Early Years Learning Centre will establish communication with relevant agencies and private protection services. The policy will be reviewed yearly by a specialist in an appropriate agency. The Centre will review the policy every six months as part of the review cycle.

Implementation of staff training sessions will be carried out not less than once per year in conjunction with Child Youth and Family or other in-service contract providers or suitably qualified persons. This will include prevention education strategies.

Parents and Whānau will also be encouraged to attend all Child Protection and Health and Safety meetings. A copy of the Child protection policy will be made available at all times for parents. If any parent has a concern about a staff member they will be encouraged to contact the Centre Manager. All concerns will be confidential, taken seriously and acted upon immediately.

All children will be involved in a preventative education programme for learning how to keep themselves and others safe. This will run in conjunction with the programme planning and evaluation cycle. Parents will be encouraged to participate in the programme.

Professionalism

All staff will abide by the Early Childhood Code of Ethics and maintain professionalism at all times. Quality of behaviour reflects the honour and dignity of the teaching profession and Management encourage teachers and staff to keep their private and professional lives separate.

Centre Management acknowledge some families do not have relatives or friends living close by to help them with the care of their child outside of Centre opening times. It is not our wish to prohibit staff from earning extra cash and assisting families in need; however we do see baby-sitting as a side-step in our quest for professional status.

Parents of attending children who want to employ a teacher outside of working hours must read and understand this policy *before* arrangements are made.

- Arrangements are to be made outside Centre opening hours.
- Parents are not to discuss any Centre issues or concerns with the staff member while babysitting. (see complaints procedure if necessary)
- Under no circumstances will unprofessional or inappropriate information sharing be tolerated.
- Staff who do choose to work outside of Centre hours must not allow this to affect their primary job. The Centre Manager will be called on to decide if this is the case.
- The Centre will not be held accountable for any issues that may arise from work (baby-sitting) outside the Centre.
- Signed permission is to be obtained if staff are required to take a child out of the Centre. This permission must state where and when the child is to be taken, by whom, and that the Centre accepts no responsibility for this arrangement.
- The Centre will review the policy every six months as part of the review cycle.

Employment

- The Centre will ensure all staff employment procedures include a thorough checking of the applicants work history, make contact with past employers and at least two referees.
- Police Vetting will be conducted before the applicant is accepted into the position.
- All teachers, relievers, kitchen staff and administration working in the Centre as well as regular visitor's at the Centre, such as ground keeper, trade's persons, will be police vetted.
- Recruitment is carried out by the Centre Manager, Recruitment Officer and YMCA Central CEO.
- Confidentiality is maintained in relation to all applicants, application forms, unsuccessful applicants and panel discussions throughout the appointment procedures.

Supervision of staff and other adults in the Centre

Opportunities for staff to be alone are kept to a minimum. The building is of a design that adults and children will be visible through half doors and viewing windows as they perform activities with children. As far as practicable, all staff shall be able to be observed by another staff member.

- Children's privacy in the bathrooms is allowed for and visibility for staff through via half doors, partitions and viewing windows.
- Sleep rooms, bathrooms and outdoor spaces are monitored frequently throughout the day.
- Visitors, volunteers and student teachers will not be permitted to perform caretaking activities such as toileting or nappy changes without the direct presence and supervision of a staff member.
- Visitors, volunteers and student teachers will not be left alone with children. They will be supervised at all times, without exception.
- There will always be a minimum of two staff rostered on at the start and end of each day. No staff member is to be at the Centre alone with children. As far as practicable, all staff shall be able to be observed by another staff member.
- Teachers are encouraged to show warmth, to comfort and nurture a child, but not to force unwanted attention by way of physical contact. Any touching should not be initiated to gratify adult needs.
- Physical contact of children during changing or washing must be for that purpose only and not more than necessary for the reason at hand.
- Visitors who are unrecognisable, or who are on the premises without good reason, will be asked to determine their reason for the visit. Without good reason, they will be asked to leave immediately.
- There are always two staff members present at all times from opening to closing hours and at least one will be 'Person Responsible'.
- All staff will be supervised by the Person Responsible at all times while children attend the Centre.
- As the roll increases, the Person Responsible will increase to two in order to provide and ensure suitable coverage. (1:50)