



Procedure

Procedure Category: HEALTH AND SAFETY

Date Created: April 2017

Procedure Name: Procedure for Identifying & Responding to Suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect HS31

The purpose of this operational procedure is to ensure appropriate, legal and ethical compliance with Licencing Criteria **HS31**.

Position Statement

The Early Childhood Sector is working with all Government Agencies to uphold the safety and well-being of all children in our care. We have a legal responsibility under the Children's Act 2014 to respond to suspected child abuse and/or neglect. As a sector we will respond in a timely and professional manner whilst putting the child first when any decisions are made.

Issue Outline

As teachers and staff working with vulnerable children, we need to know what to do when we suspect child abuse and/or neglect and how to respond. Having a system in place helps to ensure we are providing an environment that is safe and secure for children in accordance with the Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 2008 (Regulation 46). This Centre commits to support the statutory agencies to investigate abuse and will report suspected cases and concerns to these agencies as per the procedure in this document.

Alignment with Policies

This procedure aligns with the following Centre Policies:

- HS31 Child Protection Policy (Must be reviewed every three years)
- Child Abuse Policy

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

<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.

Indicators of Abuse and Neglect (Source: Oranga Tamariki)

The physical and behavioural signs, symptoms and history listed below, may indicate abuse or neglect. However they are not specific to abuse or neglect. In certain situations, contexts and combinations they may indicate other conditions. All signs must be examined in the total context of the child or young person’s situation.

The Child				
Consider physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect				
Recognise disclosure as a sign of abuse				
Recognise Physical Signs	Record Parent, Caregiver or family signs	Observe Behavioural Signs	Child/family Vulnerabilities	Identify Developmental Signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruises and welts • Cuts and abrasions • Scalds and burns • Fractures • Head injuries • Sexually transmitted infections • Failure to thrive and malnutrition • Dehydration • Inadequate hygiene and clothing • Poisoning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to family violence • Unrealistic expectations • Terrorising • Corrupting • Isolating • Humiliating • Dependency • Closure • Flight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggression • Withdrawal • Anxiety, fear and regression • Sadness • Overly responsible • Obsessions • Substance abuse • Suicidal thoughts/ plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addictions • Mental health • ORANGA TAMARIKI history • Age of parents or child • Attachment • Disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global development delay. • Specific delays: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Motor ○ Attachment ○ Speech and language ○ Social cognitive ○ Vision and hearing ○ Unusual developmental patterns

From Oranga Tamariki website: www.mvcot.govt.nz

Risk Factors of Child Abuse

Issues in the home that teachers or centre staff might become aware of, that might lead to abuse and neglect include:

- Parents with money problems, being out of work
- Overcrowding or housing struggles
- Parents with stress
- Child with special needs
- Parents isolated from friends, family and whānau
- Parents with a history of depression or other mental illness
- Parents separating.

Early signs that can lead to abuse and or neglect can be:

- Parent has a drug, alcohol or gambling problem
- Parent does not engage with their child or has a difficult relationship with them
- Child doesn't have enough clothes on and is often cold and hungry
- Child has unexplained or changeable emotions (e.g. withdrawn or depressed)
- Parents frequently yell at, swear at or shame a child
- Child seems scared of a particular adult.

Parental Factors:

- Parent has already abused a child
- Pregnancy was not wanted
- Parent has a background of abuse when growing up
- Young, unsupported mother often with low education
- Parents have unrealistic expectations of the child and lack parenting knowledge
- Parent is isolated and has few supports
- Parent has a mental illness or is abusing drugs or alcohol

Environmental Factors:

- Overcrowding in the house
- Poverty or lack of opportunity to improve the family's resources
- Family violence is present
- A non-biological adult living in the house
- Family is experiencing multiple stresses

Child Factors:

- Baby is sickly, colicky or unwanted
- Child has a physical or developmental disability
- Child is the product of an abusive relationship
- Lack of attachment between child and parent

Source: <https://www.childmatters.org.nz/insights/risk-factors/>

Procedure for Responding to Suspected Child Abuse

You see a child being abused (physical or sexual), OR you observe signs of abuse in a child OR a child reports being abused

RESPOND TO THE CHILDS NEEDS

Ensure the child is safe from immediate harm, call the Police if the child is in immediate danger

Attend to any physical or emotional distress in the child – take to hospital if appropriate

Listen to the child

Are you a
staff
member?

IMMEDIATELY INFORM YOUR MANAGER

The Manager is to take all allegations of abuse seriously, assure the informant of confidentiality & provide them with support.

If the suspected abuser is your manager, inform the service owner, 2IC, chair of the governance group and Oranga Tamariki on 0508 326 459 OR contact your local Police Station to be put in touch with specialist Police Officers

Are you
in
charge?

CALL THE
POLICE IF
THE CHILD
IS IN
IMMEDIATE
DANGER

PREPARE A WRITTEN RECORD

Record (Your centre may have a special form for this)

Date, time and place of observation / reporting of abuse

Names of anyone present

Exactly what the child said

Any physical, emotional or behavioural signs of abuse

GIVE THIS TO YOUR MANAGER

PERSON IN CHARGE

GATHER INFORMATION

Ensure you have a full report from the person who identified the abuse. Offer them support. Get them to sign the report. Tell them what actions you will take. Ring Oranga Tamariki (0508 326 459) or Plunketline (0800 933 922) and discuss your concerns. Oranga Tamariki will tell you if you need to do a formal report about your concerns.

REPORT ABUSE

Ring Oranga Tamariki on 0508 326 459 and tell them;

(If it is an emergency ring 111 or contact your nearest Police Station)

This link will help you find the phone number for your closest Police Station;

<http://www.police.govt.nz/contact-us/stations/a2z/C>

Your own name and contact details

Name of child/children (also known as/nicknames)

Date of birth (if known)

Ethnicity (if known)

Name of caregivers, parents and other family members and current living situation

Current legal custodians

Reasons why it is believed that the child has been abused

Other significant background information

Any concerns for your physical safety in making this notification

ASK WHAT HAPPENS NEXT – Get a timeframe

Alleged abuse by person outside the service

Work with Oranga Tamariki to decide how and when parents are told

Alleged abuse by person inside the service

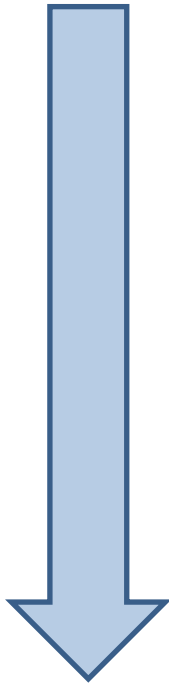
Alleged abuse is by a child – follow the yellow arrow

OUTSIDE THE SERVICE

You are most likely to suspect the abuse is by a parent but you cannot assume this. If you are concerned about the child going home, tell Oranga Tamariki or the Police this.

While the child is in your care, ensure the child is not at risk of being further abused.

Cover yourself, do not be alone with this child, and if the suspected abuser is in the centre, do not leave them alone with the child.



INSIDE SERVICE

Maintain close liaison with Oranga Tamariki/the Police and discuss any actions you want to take with them first.

Ensure the suspected abuser is not left alone with the children

Discuss with Oranga Tamariki/Police about who will tell the suspected abuser of the allegation and whether the suspected abuser should remain on the ECS premises.

Check your Centre Policy, your Policy may state that in the event of an allegation the accused is automatically placed on leave/stood down

If they remain in the centre and further abuse occurs the owner of the centre is liable for failing to provide a safe environment.

Once the suspected abuser is informed, recommend they seek support from their union or lawyer.

Ensure records are kept of any comments or event relating to the complaint(s) and/or allegations and follow up action is taken and documented.

Get employment/legal advice where appropriate.



HEALING AND COMMUNICATION – ADULT TO CHILD ABUSE

Manager will need to inform the other staff what is happening, divulging only that information which is required and maintaining confidentiality for the informant

If there is disruption to the ECE service or community, negative impacts on other children and/or staff or media interest, contact;

SPECIAL EDUCATION TRAUMATIC INCIDENT COORDINATOR for support on 0800 848 326

Seek legal advice before making any statement to parents or liaise with the coordinator above

Time to review Centre Policies and Procedures to reflect on their effectiveness.

Alleged abuser is a child



ALLEGED ABUSER IS A CHILD

Attend to the immediate welfare of the victim as per the above process

If one child is abusing another, it is often an indicator that the abusing child has been abused

Document and Inform the Manager as in the above process, do not act alone

Refer to the Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool for amber and red behaviour indicators and the action required www.brook.org.uk/our-work/the-sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool



Amber Behaviours

Preoccupation with adult sexual behaviour

Pulling other children's pants down/skirts up/trousers down against their will

Talking about sex using adult slang

Preoccupation with touching the genitals of other people

Following others into toilets or changing rooms to look at them or touch them

Talking about sexual activities seen on TV/online

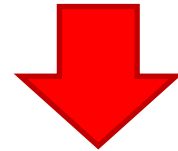


What is amber behaviour?

Unusual for that particular child or young person

Of potential concern due to age, or developmental differences

Of potential concern due to activity type, frequency, duration or context in which they occur



Red Behaviours

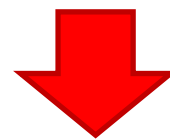
Persistently touching the genitals of other children

Persistent attempts to touch the genitals of adults

Simulation of sexual activity in play

Sexual behaviour between young children involving penetration with objects

Forcing other children to engage in sexual play



What is red behaviour?

Excessive, secretive, compulsive, coercive, degrading or threatening

Involving significant age, developmental, or power differences

Of concern due to the activity type, frequency, duration or the context in which they occur



Response

Amber behaviours have the potential to be outside of safe and healthy behaviours. Report to the Manager and document (as above)

For amber behaviour it may be decided to do a series of observations looking for a pattern, document and monitor carefully considering the child's current situation. Child not to be left alone with other children whilst investigating, staff member to shadow at all times

Observations and/or discussion with parents may reveal an innocent explanation, if not, act

Call Oranga Tamariki and/or local Police Station for advice, follow their instructions

If there is immediate risk to other children then act immediately

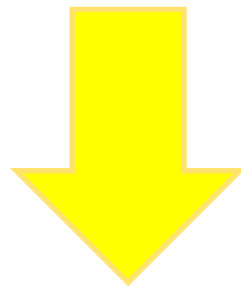
Response

Red behaviours are outside of safe and healthy behaviours

Report to the Manager and document (as above)

For red behaviour call Oranga Tamariki and/or your nearest Police Station for advice

Depending on circumstances the child accused of the abuse may need to have their enrolment suspended/cancelled while the investigation is under way and help and support is being sought for them. Follow the advice of Oranga Tamariki. Consider the impact on the victim if they encounter the perpetrator in the centre



HEALING AND COMMUNICATION – CHILD TO CHILD ABUSE

The Manager will need to work closely with the family of the child who was abused by another child, offering as much support as is needed

Call Special Education Traumatic Incident Coordinator for support on 0800 848 326

Seek legal advice and help with any statement made to parents

Whether or not the child perpetrator returns to the centre will be up to the Centre to decide in conjunction with families/Whānau and Oranga Tamariki

Time to review Centre Policies and Procedures to reflect on their effectiveness.

Relevant Background (including Legislation/Regulation/Licensing references)

Licensing Criteria 2008, Health and Safety, Child Protection;

- **HS31(2):** A Procedure that sets out how the service will identify and respond to suspected child abuse and/or neglect

Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 2008 (Regulation 46)

Children's Act 2014

New Zealand Teachers Council Code of Ethics

Draft Code of Professional Responsibility 2017

- **2.0** Commitment to Learners
- **2.1** Promoting their wellbeing and protecting them from harm
 - Taking appropriate action where there is reason to believe they may have been, or may be at risk of being, harmed (including self-harm), abused or neglected.

Relevant Links for further information and downloads

<http://www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz/assets/CAP-Uploads/childrens-workforce/Safer-Organisations-safer-children.pdf>

<http://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/ministry-priorities/vulnerable-children/>

www.ecc.org.nz/Folder?Action=View%20File&Folder_id=107&File=Signs%20of%20Abuse%20and%20Neglect.pdf

www.brook.org.uk/brook_tools/traffic/Brook_Traffic_Light_Tool.pdf

<http://www.cyf.govt.nz/documents/about-us/publications/27713-working-together-3-0-45ppi.pdf>

Implementation

Clear processes and procedures have been developed and staff trained to follow them. Management support open communication.

Review

Review annually or when there is a significant change in the area of the policy topic or the procedure. Review in alignment or alongside your child protection policy.

Authorised:	Vikki Cooper
Date:	August, 2023
Review Date:	Term 1, 2025
Consultation Undertaken:	