

CHILD PROTECTION

What

The purpose of this Policy is to establish the actions that are to be taken to protect children from abuse and neglect by meeting Ministry of Education Early Childhood Education Licensing Criteria HS31& 32 and provisions of the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014.

This policy outlines our commitment to child protection. It includes practice notes on measures to be taken to prevent child abuse.

This policy applies to all children who attend Olive Shoots ECC and to those children with whom personnel come into contact with in the course of their work with Olive Shoots.

Staff, volunteers and management of Olive Shoots are expected to be familiar with this policy. This also applies to any contracted personnel providing support services to families and the centre.

For the purpose of this policy, abuse is used in the context of adult to child. Abuse relating to child to child, or child to adult is not within the scope of this policy.

Why

Child abuse and neglect is never acceptable. Children need our protection. The ECE sector has a key role to play in providing a safe environment for children, free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse. It also supports families/whānau to protect their children.

How

- Children and their bodies are to be treated with respect and dignity at all times.
- The protection of the child is paramount.
- All staff are to make themselves familiar with the Olive Shoots Child Protection Policy. We are committed to supporting all staff to work in accordance with this policy.
- Our Child Protection Policy supports our staff to respond appropriately to potential child protection concerns, including suspected abuse or neglect. It is our commitment to protect children from abuse and to recognise the important roles all our staff have in protecting children.
- We are committed to promoting a culture where staff feel confident that they can constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.
- We have a commitment to ensure that all staff are able to identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect and are able to take appropriate action in response.
- For children to be safe from abuse and/or neglect, both parents and teachers need to have a shared understanding of what abuse is and how it can be prevented.
- We will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.

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‘Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless, maintain the rights of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.’ Ps 82:3, 4

Definitions

Child Abuse is defined in the Children Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 as “the harming (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person”.

Physical abuse is a non-accidental act on a child that results in physical harm. This includes, but is not limited to, beating, hitting, shaking, burning, drowning, suffocating, biting, poisoning or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical abuse also involves the fabrication or inducing of illness.

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effect on the child’s emotional development. This can include a pattern of rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child. It may also include age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It also includes the seeing or the hearing of ill treatment of others.

Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities (penetrative and non-penetrative, for example, rape, kissing, touching, masturbation) as well as non-contact acts such as involving children in the looking at or production of sexual images, sexual activities and sexual behaviours.

Staff should be aware of their ‘duty of care’ which precludes developing a sexual relationship with or the grooming of a child. A sexual relationship between an adult and a child will always be wrong, unequal and unacceptable.

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: <http://www.childmatters.org.nz>

Responsibilities

The Managers will:

- Be responsible for the maintenance and annual review of this policy, in addition to carrying out the responsibilities outlined in this policy.
- Ensure that all staff have access to the training they need.
- Give no persons, other than employed staff or long- term relievers over the age of 1 years, tasks that involve nappy changing, toileting or responsibility for the supervision of children. Communication between the Managers and teachers will guide the decision as to when long term relievers commence these duties.
- Ensure that staff and other adults visiting or working in the Centre are well supported and visible in the activities they perform with children to ensure the safety of all concerned.
- Ensure the Centre’s procedures protect staff from unjustified allegations of abuse.
- Ensure the Centre has educational and informational resources for children and adults on child abuse.

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- Immediately investigate and fully and objectively record in writing, any reports of incidents, allegations or suspicions of child abuse.

Staff will:

- Always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the child.
- Familiarise themselves with this Centre policy.
- Immediately notify the Managers if they observe signs of child abuse or if anyone reports or discloses to them any suspicions of child abuse of children at the Centre, or a pattern of neglect or concerns is identified.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- All staff are responsible for the safety of children in their care and should not make assumptions for or against suspected abuse.
- Failure of staff to comply with this policy will be regarded as serious misconduct.

Recruitment and employment (safety checking)

The single most effective time at which an organisation can minimise the possibility of abuse to children in its care, is the appointment of new staff.

Our Personnel Policy reflects a commitment to child protection by including comprehensive screening procedures. Safety checking will be carried out in accordance with the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.

This will include:

- A police vet,
- Identity verification,
- Checking of references
- An interview.
- Information of work history from the last 5 years.

If there is any suspicion that an applicant might pose a risk to a child, that applicant will not be employed.

Training, supervision and support

Training, resources and/or advice will be available to ensure that all staff can carry out their roles in terms of this policy, particularly:

- Understanding child abuse and neglect and recognising the signs (see Appendix A)
- Recognising their responsibility about suspected poor practice or possible abuse
- Reducing the risk of child abuse
- Understanding and complying with legal obligations in regard to child abuse
- Working with outside agencies on child abuse issues
- Planning of environment and supervision to minimise risk
- Dealing with issues arising and supporting child/parents/family/whanau
- Responding in the most appropriate way to children who are suspected of being abused.

This policy will be part of the initial staff induction programme.

At least once a year at a staff meeting this Child Protection Policy will be discussed.

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See Appendix B for record of staff training in regards to Child Protection and Abuse.

Safe Working Practices

- Staff are not to physically, emotionally or verbally abuse children.
- All staff will support and work alongside each other.
- Students and volunteers are supervised in their work and never left alone with children. These people will also be police vetted if in the centre on a regular basis.
- It is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with children, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role.
- There may be occasions when a child needs restraint or safe handling. Adults should respond to these situations in accordance with our Social Competence policy. Staff are required to get assistance and to withdraw from a situation when they become stressed by a child's behaviour.
- Safe practice ratios will always be in place. Staff will ensure children are always supervised and visible. When staff are changing young children or bathing them, other staff should be made aware that they are carrying out these duties. Doors must be open.
- Only permanent staff and long-term relievers will be involved in changing, bathing, nappy changing and toileting of children.
- Staff will endeavour to be sensitive to a child's need for privacy while avoiding being in compromising situations.
- We teach children to keep their bodies private in a group setting. If the occasion arises, we will talk about good and bad touching and saying "no" to other children, as well as to adults.
- Children who need to be changed due to water play or messy play or otherwise will be changed in view of other staff.
- When toileting or changing a child's clothes always ask the child's permission e.g. "Do you need some help...is it ok if I wipe you?" This reinforces to children that their body belongs to them and others do not have the right to touch private parts. It helps the child to feel in control in this area of their life.
- Children must wear clothing in the centre and are encouraged to take responsibility for managing their own physical needs as is age appropriate e.g. wiping bottoms/ dressing themselves.
- In cases when children attempt to hit teachers, teachers are to let children know that their actions are unacceptable and to get support from colleagues if needed.
- Staff will approach any visitors to see if they have a legitimate purpose to be on the premises. If so, they will sign the visitor's book. Otherwise they will be asked to leave the premises.
- Phoned messages about a change of plan concerning who will pick up a child will be relayed immediately to the teachers or be written on the whiteboard.

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- All staff will be made aware who is not authorised to pick up a child. This information is to be given to the Managers by the parent on enrolment.
- No child can leave the centre premises on centre excursions without written permission from parents except in cases of emergency and then only after discussion with the Centre Managers.

Identifying possible abuse or neglect

Our approach to identifying abuse or neglect is guided by the following principles:

- We understand that every situation is different and it's important to consider all available information about the child and their environment before reaching conclusions. For example, behavioural concerns may be the result of life events, such as divorce, accidental injury, the arrival of a new sibling etc.
- We understand when we are concerned a child is showing signs of potential abuse or neglect, we should talk to the Managers and not act alone.
- While there are definitions of abuse, the important thing is for us to consider overall wellbeing and the risk of harm to the child. It is not so important to be able to categorise the type of abuse or neglect.
- It is normal for us to feel uncertain, however, the important thing is that we should be able to recognise when something is wrong, especially if we notice a pattern forming or several signs that make us concerned.

We recognise the signs of potential abuse:

- Physical signs (e.g., unexplained injuries, bruises, burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, and sexually transmitted diseases).
- Developmental delays (e.g., small for their age, cognitive delays, poor speech and social skills)
- Emotional abuse/neglect (e.g., sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness and evidence of self-harm).
- Behavioural concerns (e.g., age-inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place, eating disorders/substance abuse, disengagement/neediness, aggression).
- The child talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes called an allegation or disclosure).

We are aware of the signs of potential neglect:

- Physical signs (e.g., looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight).
- Developmental delays (e.g., small for their age, cognitive delays, poor speech and social skills).
- Emotional abuse/neglect (e.g., sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness, loneliness and evidence of self-harm).
- Behavioural concerns (eg., disengagement/neediness, eating disorders/substance abuse, aggression).
- Neglectful supervision (e.g., out and about unsupervised, left alone, no safe home to return to)
- Medical neglect (e.g., persistent nappy rash or skin disorders or other untreated medical issues).

See appendix A: Indicators of Abuse

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Responding to suspected abuse or neglect

In all cases where a member of staff has a concern about a child being or likely to be abused or neglected (refer to Definitions) by an adult, they will report this to the Managers who will formulate a plan to address the care and protection concerns.

All issues of concern should be recorded on the Record of Issue or Concern template. (see appendix C)

A referral to Oranga Tamariki may be made at any time.

It is mandatory for all concerns to be reported/referred to the Designated Person for Child Protection within a time period which allows for effective consultation/advice to be given.

Our organisation recognises that in some cases the involvement of statutory agencies would be inappropriate and potentially harmful to families/whānau. Throughout New Zealand statutory and non-statutory agencies provide a network of mutually supportive services and it is important for us to work with these to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and families/whānau in a manner proportionate to the level of need and risk.

See Appendix D: Responding to Child when the Child Discloses Abuse

See Appendix E: Recording & Notifying Oranga Tamariki of Child Abuse or Neglect

Allegations or concerns about staff, parents & volunteers

Any allegation that a member of staff, parent or volunteer has behaved in an inappropriate or unsafe way must be taken seriously.

- We will respond to suspicions and allegations of child abuse by a member of staff in a manner which best ensures children's or young person's' immediate and long-term safety and will treat suspicions or allegations against a staff member with the same seriousness as suspicions or allegations made against any other person.
- We will not act alone and will refer all suspected situations of child abuse to Police or Oranga Tamariki. The safety of the child will be the primary consideration, and no person in this organisation will collude to protect an adult or an organisation.
- When abuse is suspected, staff will follow the process for Responding to a child when the child discloses abuse (Appendix D).
- The suspected staff member, parent or volunteer will be prevented from having further unsupervised access to children during any investigation and will be informed fully of their rights.

See Appendix D: Responding to Child when the Child Discloses Abuse

Parent relationships

We encourage parents/caregivers/whānau to visit freely and to be involved as much as possible with the Centre. They, however, should not perform caretaking tasks with other people's children, discipline other people's children or be alone with them.

The centre will support parents by sharing information about parenting, social competence, children's development and support groups.

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If parents have concerns about the treatment of a child by our staff they are encouraged to make this known to the Co- Managers, who will ensure that the matter is investigated and acted on immediately. Steps are outlined in the Complaints Policy.

It is mandatory that any parent/caregiver or visitor to the Centre be made aware of their responsibilities and restrictions regarding photographing and videoing children other than those from their own family.

It is required that parents/caregivers sign the Cybersafety Agreement upon enrolment.

Parents of children who attend our Centre will be made aware of our Child Protection policy.

Relationships with External Agencies

We will ensure that we have contacts for Oranga Tamariki and Police officers.

Following are specialist agencies that offer support:

Henderson Police (ask for Prevention Education Office) - 09 8390600
Oranga Tamariki- 0508 326 459 (912 3820)
Child Abuse 24hr line - 0508 326 459
Community Child Health & Disability - Public Health Nurse -09 639 0200
Ministry of Education - 09 632 9400
AklD District Health Board Family Services/Starship -09 307 4949
Are You OK? (Family Violence Information Line) - 0800 456 450
Parent Helpline - 0800568 856
Plunket Line - 0800 933 922.
Child Matters to us - <http://www.childmatters.org.nz>

Alignment with Other Policies

- Personnel policies – Staff Safety Checking process
- Nappy Changing policy
- Excursion policy
- Complaints policy
- Social Competence 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

Health and safety practices criterion 31 and 32

Vulnerable Children Act 2014 and associated regulations.

Further information can be found on:

http://www.lead.ece.govt.nz/~media/Educate/Files/Reference%20Downloads/Lead/Files/final_Protocol_MoECYF2.pdf

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Appendix A: Signs of Abuse and Neglect (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 • CYF 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"> o Motor o Attachment o Speech and language o Social cognitive o Vision and hearing o Unusual developmental patterns

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

Issues in the home

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 (eg, withdrawn or depressed)
- Parents frequently yell at, swear at or shame a child
- Child seems scared of a particular adult.

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APPENDIX C: Record of Issue or Concern template

Child name:		DOB:
Date:		Time:
Notes:		
Action:		

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Appendix D: Responding to a child when the child discloses abuse

Only a minority of children actively disclose abuse. Most child abuse is disclosed accidentally or through observation by an adult of a child’s behaviour, words and physical appearance.

Disclosures by children are often subtle and need to be handled with particular care, including an awareness of the child’s cultural identity and how that affects interpretation of their behaviour and language.

When a child does disclose abuse, this needs to be taken very seriously. It is important that any disclosure is dealt with appropriately, both for the wellbeing of the child and also to ensure that your actions do not jeopardise possible legal action against the abuser.

There are a number of basic 'rules' that should be followed to ensure the safe handling of any disclosures of abuse from a child:

- **Don’t panic.**
- **Remember that the safety and well-being of the child come before the interests of any other person.**

i. Listen to the child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the child directly, but do not appear shocked. • Don’t seek help while the child is talking to you.
ii. Reassure the child	<p>Reassure them that they did the right thing by telling someone. Let the child know that they are not in trouble Assure them that it is not their fault and you will do your best to help. Let them know that you need to tell someone else. Let them know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.</p>
iii. Ask open-ended prompts – eg: “what happened next?”	<p>Do not interview the child in other words, do not ask questions beyond open prompts for the child to continue) Do not make promises that cannot be kept, eg: “I will keep you safe now”</p>
iv. If the child is visibly distressed	<p>Provide appropriate reassurance and re-engage in appropriate activities under supervision until they are able to participate in ordinary activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware that the child may have been threatened.
v. If the child is not in immediate danger	<p>Re-involve the child in ordinary activities and explain what you are going to do next</p>
vi. If the child is in immediate danger	<p>Contact the Police immediately (call 111)</p>
vii. As soon as possible, formally record the disclosure (Use Record of Issue or Concern form)	<p>Make certain you distinguish between what the child has actually said and the inferences you may have made. Accuracy is paramount in this stage of the procedure</p> <p>Record: Write down what the child says in their own words – record what you have seen and heard also. Word-for-word what the child said The date, time and who was present</p>
	<p>Tell the Head Teacher or Manager as soon as possible and the Recording and notifying Oranga Tamariki will be followed, see Appendix D After making the referral to Oranga Tamariki or the Police, look after yourself. Discuss the matter with your Head Teacher, manager or relevant person.</p>

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Appendix E: Recording and notifying Oranga Tamariki of child abuse or neglect

- The same action should be taken if the allegation is about abuse that has taken place in the past, as it will be important to find out if the person is still working with or has access to the children
- Dealing with an allegation that a professional, staff member, or volunteer has abused a child is difficult but must be taken seriously and dealt with carefully and fairly.

What process to follow	For example	Key considerations
i. Recording	Formally record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anything said by the child. - The date, time, location and the names of any staff that may be relevant -The factual concerns or observations that have led to the suspicion of abuse or neglect (eg: any physical, behavioural or developmental concerns) - The action taken by your Centre -Any other information that may be relevant 	Relevant information can inform any future actions
ii. Decision-making	Discuss any concern with the Head Teacher or Manager	No decisions should be made in isolation
iii. Notifying authorities	Notify Oranga Tamariki promptly if there is a belief that a child has been or is likely to be abused or neglected. A phone call to the National Contact Centre (0508 Family / 0508 326459) is the preferential initial contact with Oranga Tamariki as this enables both parties to discuss the nature of the concerns and appropriate response options. Phone: 0508 Family / 0508 326459 Fax: 09 914 1211	Oranga Tamariki will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make the decision to inform the parents or caregivers in consultation with your Centre. - Advise what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the Police
iv. Following the advice of Oranga Tamariki	Oranga Tamariki advice will include what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the Police	Oranga Tamariki is responsible for looking into the situation to find out what may be happening, whether they need to work with the family or to put them in touch with people in their community who can help
v. Storing relevant information	Securely store: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The record of the concern • A record of any related discussions, including copies of correspondence where appropriate A record of any advice received <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The action your Centre took, including any rationale • If the notification is based on an accumulation of concerns rather than a specific incident. 	Records assist in identifying patterns

Materials sourced from Child Matters & ECC

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