



## Child Protection Policy

### Objective

All educators, staff, and volunteers are dedicated to recognising and addressing potential and significant risks of harm to children and young people within our Centre. We fully understand our duty of care to protect children from all forms of abuse and neglect and are always committed to upholding both our ethical and legal responsibilities.

We strive to implement effective strategies that promote the safety and wellbeing of every child. Our Centre prioritises the best interests of each child, supporting their growth and development in a secure and child-safe environment.

### Other related policies and procedures

Child Supervision Policy

Centre Morning and Afternoon Supervision plans

Code of Conduct for Albert Waterways Children's Centre

Confidentiality of Records Policy

Child Safe Environment Policy

### Application of this policy

This policy applies to all employees, nominated supervisor, committee members, management, volunteers, visitors, students, children and families while they are in the centre/workplace including at a site away from their usual workplace. Should the need arise, the policy will be translated into appropriate languages.

### Definitions

**Mandatory reporting** is the legislative requirement for selected classes of people to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities. In Queensland, mandatory reporting is regulated by the *Child Protection Act 1999*.

### Mandatory reporters

Mandatory reporters in Queensland, are people who deliver the following services, wholly or partly, to children as part of their paid or professional work:

- teachers
- doctors
- registered nurses
- police officers with child protection responsibilities
- a person performing a child advocate function under the public guardian act 2014
- early childhood education and care professionals

All staff have a responsibility to recognise and respond to concerns for safety, welfare and the wellbeing of children and young people, and to report these concerns to management and Child Safety.

## **WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?**

The World Health Organisation ([WHO], 2006, p. 9) defines child abuse and neglect as:

*“All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.”*

Child abuse is any action towards a child or young person that harms or puts at risk their physical, psychological or emotional health or development. Child abuse can be a single incident or can be a number of different incidents that take place over time. There are different forms of child abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

## **TYPES OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

The QLD Government identifies the following types of abuse and neglect:

- physical
- sexual
- emotional
- neglect

There are common physical and behavioural signs that may indicate abuse or neglect. The presence of one of these signs does not necessarily mean abuse or neglect. Behavioural or physical signs which assist in recognising harm to children are known as indicators.

One indicator on its own may not imply abuse or neglect. However, a single indicator can be as important as the presence of several indicators. Each indicator needs to be deliberated in the perspective of other indicators and the child’s circumstances. A child's behaviour is likely to be affected if he/she is under stress. There can be many causes of stress, and it is important to find out specifically what is causing the stress. Abuse and neglect can be single incidents or ongoing and may be intentional or unintentional.

The QLD Government provides definitions and physical indicators: [Types of child abuse](#)

## **CHILD PROTECTION GUIDE**

Professionals who encounter concerns related to possible abuse or neglect of children will use the online [Child Protection Guide](#) (CPG) to assist in making decisions about where to report or refer their concerns.

The online Child Protection Guide is a tool to assist professionals’ decision making if concerns arise about a child who appears:

- to have experiences or is likely to experience significant harm AND
- may not have a parent willing and able to protect them from harm.

The CPG will help professionals decide to report to Child Safety Services or refer to other service providers, to help families receive appropriate supports.

### **BLUE CARD (Working with Children Check)**

Queensland's Working with Children Check is administered by the Blue Card Services. Blue Card Services monitors and audits service providers to ensure compliance including risk management to ensure that appropriate safeguards are implemented and maintained to protect children from harm. Our Centre will not employ or engage a person who does not hold a valid Blue Card (WWCC).

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Our Centre strongly opposes any type of abuse against a child and endorses high quality practices in relation to protecting children. We have policies and procedures in place that demonstrate our aim and willingness to keep children and young people safe in accordance with the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020.

Educators have an important role to support children and young people and to identify concerns that may jeopardise their safety, welfare, or wellbeing including:

- A duty of care to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to prevent harm to children
- Obligations are met under child protection legislation
- Obligations are met under work, health and safety legislation.

To ensure best practice, all educators will attend approved child protection training certified by a registered training organisation. Educators will continue to maintain current knowledge of child protection and mandatory reporter requirements by completing Child Protection Awareness Training annually.

### **THE NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL ENSURE:**

- that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met
- educators, staff, students and volunteers have knowledge of and adhere to this policy
- families are aware of this *Child Protection Policy*
- any responsible person in day-to-day charge of the Centre has successfully completed a course in child protection approved by the regulatory authority
- the Centre registers with Blue Card Services, validates and links each staff, educator, committee members, volunteers and students Blue Card in accordance with the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* BEFORE the person begins working or interacting with children
- a record is kept of each Blue Card number and expiry date
- all employees, volunteers and students are:
  - provided with a copy of the current *Child Protection and Child Safe Environment Policies*

- required to participate in a comprehensive induction and orientation program, including an understanding of child protection law
  - supported to create and maintain a child safe culture within the Centre by complying with National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (Child Safe Standards)
  - provided with support to adhere to a zero-tolerance stance against child abuse
  - aware of their mandatory reporting obligations and responsibilities to report all concerns about a child suffering abuse or neglect to Queensland Government, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disabilities Services (DCSSDS) - Regional Intake Services
  - aware of their mandatory reporting obligations and responsibilities to report a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering, significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse; and may not have a parent able and willing to protect the child from the harm to Child Safety Services
  - aware of indicators showing a child may be at risk of harm or significant risk of harm.
  - aware that neglecting to report child protection concerns may be deemed a criminal offence
- training and development are provided for all educators, staff, and volunteers in child protection on an annual basis
  - educators and staff are provided with a reporting procedure and professional standards to safeguard children and protect the integrity of educators, staff and volunteers
  - *a Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy* is developed to identify potential risk of harm to children and young people
  - all educators and staff are aware of their commitment to the *Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy*
  - educators are provided with training and ongoing supervision to ensure they understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility, and they adhere to the National Principles Child Safe Organisations
  - access is provided to all staff regarding relevant legislations, regulations, standards and other resources to help educators, staff, and volunteers meet their obligations
  - records of abuse or suspected abuse are kept in line with our *Confidentiality of Records Policy*
  - educators, staff, volunteers and students are well informed about the different ways children may express concerns, distress and disclose harm as well as the process for responding to disclosures from children- including a complaint that alleges a child is exhibiting sexual behaviours that may be harmful to the child or another child. (ACECQA 2023)
  - ensure our complaint handling processes are child-focused providing support and guidance for children to know who to talk to if they are feeling unsafe (*See Dealing with Complaints Policy*).

## **EDUCATORS WILL:**

- contact the police on 000 if there is an immediate danger to a child and intervene if it is safe to do so
- participate in a comprehensive induction and orientation program, including an understanding of child protection law
- provide valid Blue Card details during their employment and engagement at the service
- advise the nominated supervisor of any circumstances that may affect their Blue Card clearance

- be able to recognise indicators of abuse to children and young people through participation in annual child protection training
- respect what a child discloses, taking it seriously and follow up on their concerns through the appropriate channels
- comprehend their obligations as mandatory reporters and their requirement to report any situation where they believe, on reasonable grounds, that a child is at risk of significant harm to the Child Safety Services:
  - during normal business hours - contact the Regional Intake Service see [QLD government website](#) for contact details
  - After hours and on weekends - contact the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre on 1800 177 135. The service operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- refer families to appropriate agencies where concerns of harm do not meet the threshold of significant harm. These services may be located through Family and Child Connect at <https://familychildconnect.org.au/>. Family consent will be sought before making referrals.
- promote the welfare, safety, and wellbeing of children at the Centre by creating and maintaining child safe environment
- allow children to be part of decision-making processes where appropriate
- foster a culture of openness and respect where children and young people feel safe to disclose risk of harm to children
- prepare accurate records recording exactly what happened, conversations that took place and what was observed to pass on to the relevant authorities to assist with any investigation
- understand that allegations of abuse or suspected abuse against them are treated in the same way as allegations of abuse against other people
- NOT investigate suspicion of abuse or neglect but collect only enough information to substantiate concerns and pass on to Child Safety Services or appropriate authority
- identify and notify any concerns around staff, educator or volunteer behaviour or conduct to management of the Centre.

#### **STUDENTS/ VOLUNTEERS/ VISITORS WILL:**

- contact the police on 000 if there is an immediate danger to a child and intervene if it is safe to do so
- participate in a comprehensive induction and orientation program, including an understanding of child protection law
- provide valid Blue Card clearance details during their engagement at the Centre
- advise the approved provider of any circumstances that may affect their Blue Card status
- promote the welfare, safety, and wellbeing of children at the Centre, fostering a child safe culture
- participate in child protection training as required
- provide a child safe environment for all children
- allow children to be part of decision-making processes where appropriate
- prepare accurate records recording exactly what happened, conversations that took place and what was observed to pass on to the relevant authorities to assist with any investigation
- understand that allegations of abuse or suspected abuse against them are treated in the same way as allegations of abuse against other people

- NOT investigate suspicion of abuse or neglect but collect only enough information to substantiate concerns and pass on to the Queensland Government, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disabilities Services (DCSSDS) - Regional Intake Services
- identify and notify any concerns around staff, educator or volunteer behaviour or conduct to management of the Centre.

## **DOCUMENTING A DISCLOSURE**

A disclosure of harm emerges when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened or is likely to happen. When a child discloses that he or she has been abused, it is an opportunity for an adult to provide immediate support and comfort and to assist in protecting the child from the abuse. It is also a chance to help the child connect to professional services that can keep them safe, provide support and facilitate their recovery from trauma. Disclosure is about seeking support, and your response can have a great impact on the child or young person's ability to seek further help and recover from the trauma.

### **WHEN RECEIVING A DISCLOSURE OF HARM, THE PERSON RECEIVING THE DISCLOSURE WILL:**

- Give the child/young person their full attention and ensure they feel heard.
- Stay calm and find a private space to talk.
- Avoid making promises they cannot keep, such as guaranteeing confidentiality.
- Be honest about the next steps and explain the need to involve someone who can help.
- Reassure the child/young person that speaking up was the right decision.
- Ask only necessary questions to confirm the need for a report, avoiding probing questions that may cause distress or interfere with further investigations.
- Allow the child/young person to speak at their own pace, using their own words.
- Refrain from investigating the matter, mediating, or confronting the alleged perpetrator.

### **Documenting the Disclosure**

Staff must document the disclosure as soon as possible, ensuring accuracy and objectivity. The record should include:

- The time, date, and place of the disclosure.
- A detailed account of what was said, including the child's words and any responses or actions taken by staff.
- The date of the report and the staff member's signature.
- Factual observations, including dates, interactions, and relevant anecdotes.
- Photographs (if applicable) to document physical injuries, hygiene, or health concerns.
- Any relevant conversations between caregivers and staff.

Confidentiality must be maintained, and all documentation should be securely stored.

### **Reporting and Internal Communication**

- After gathering the facts, staff should discuss concerns with colleagues in the room, sharing documented observations and assessing the urgency of the situation.
- The Director/Nominated Supervisor must be informed promptly.
- Each room has a designated confidential book for documentation, which must be securely stored and kept out of reach of families.

By following these procedures, our Centre ensures that disclosures are handled with sensitivity, professionalism, and a commitment to the child's safety.

## **MAKING A REPORT**

Mandatory reporters must report to Child Safety a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse and may not have a parent able and willing to protect them from the harm. Mandatory reporters should still report to Child Safety a reasonable suspicion a child may be in need of protection where the harm or risk of harm relates to any other type of abuse or neglect.

Educators should refer to the [Child Protection Guide](#) to decide whether to refer a family for help or to make a report to Child Safety. To report a concern to Child Safety, educators are to complete an online report form on the [DCSSDS Child Safety](#) website- Regional Intake.

Or call: Department of Communities Child Safety and Disability Services on free call 1300 679 849, or Queensland Police Service (Broadbeach Station – 07 55812800)

When a report is made, ensure you provide the following information:

- the name, age and address of the child or young person
- the reasons you suspect the child or young person may have experienced or is at risk of experiencing harm
- the immediate risk to the child or young person
- contact details. You may remain anonymous; however, it is preferable to provide these details so that the officer can call you if further information is needed.

## **NOTIFICATIONS**

### **THE APPROVED PROVIDER/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL:**

- notify the regulatory authority through the NQA-ITS (within 7 days) of any incident where it is reasonably believed that physical and/or sexual abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for by the Centre.
- notify the regulatory authority through the NQA-ITS (within 7 days) of any allegation that sexual or physical abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for by the Centre.
- notify the regulatory authority through the NQA-ITS (within 24 hours) of any complaints alleging that a serious incident has occurred or is occurring at the Centre.
- notify the regulatory authority through the NQA-ITS (within 24 hours) of a serious incident, which may include physical or sexual abuse where emergency services attended the Centre.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

It is important that any notification remains confidential, as it is vitally important to remember that no confirmation of any allegation can be made until the matter is investigated. The individual who makes the notification should not inform the suspected perpetrator (if known). This ensures the matter can be investigated without contamination of evidence or pre-rehearsed statements. It also minimises the risk of retaliation on the child/young person for disclosing.

## **PROTECTION FOR REPORTERS**

All reporters are protected against retribution for making or proposing to make a report under amendments to the *Child Protection Act 1999* effective 31 August 2020. The identity of the reporter is protected by law from being disclosed, except in certain exceptional circumstances. Provided the report is made in good faith:

- The report will not breach standards of professional conduct
- The report cannot lead to defamation and civil and criminal liability
- The report is not admissible in any proceedings as evidence against the person who made the report
- A person cannot be compelled by a court to provide the report or disclose its contents
- The identity of the person making the report is protected.

A report is also an exempt document under the *Freedom of Information Act 1989*.

## **SHARING OF INFORMATION**

Sharing information is a key part of ensuring that vulnerable children are protected and supported. The *Child Protection Act 1999* sets out the legal framework for reporting concerns about children to Child Safety and referring families to Family and Child Connect and support services, including intensive family support services. It outlines information sharing rights and responsibilities between professionals, Child Safety and services that support children and families.

Sharing concerns and information about a family with the right service enables a comprehensive assessment, informs decision making and leads to better outcomes that ensure the child's safety. Sharing information can also facilitate a coordinated multi-agency response to families with multiple or complex needs.

Where possible, you should obtain a family's consent to share information. You do not need written consent to share information. A verbal agreement or acknowledgment is sufficient. It is advisable to document the conversation for your own records.

The legislative provision that enables direct referrals without consent allows early support to be offered to the family before problems escalate and require statutory intervention. Sharing information takes precedence over a parent's right to confidentiality or privacy because the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the child is paramount.

## **BREACH OF CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

All educators, students, volunteers, and staff working with children have a duty of care to support and protect children. A breach of our Child Protection Policy may include if a person:

- Does something that a reasonable person in that person's position would not do in a particular situation



- Fails to do something that a reasonable person in that person's position would do in the circumstances, or
- Acts or fails to act in a way that causes harm to someone the person owes a duty of care.

A breach is any action or inaction by any individual within the Centre, including children and young people, that fails to comply with any part of this policy. This includes, but is not limited to, situations where:

- There is any suspicion of a child being abused by a person working at the Centre, or
- A parent or outside person reports an alleged act of abuse against a child while at the Centre, or
- A staff member reports an alleged act of abuse against a child while at the Centre, or
- A child makes a report of an alleged act of abuse by a person working at the Centre.

## **MANAGING A BREACH IN CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

Management will investigate any breaches of this policy in a fair, unbiased, and supportive manner.

- Any person who suspects, witnesses, or receives a verbal report of a breach must immediately inform the Director or the person in charge at the time.
- If the Director or the person in charge is the subject of the complaint, the staff member must report the matter confidentially to the Committee President.
- A written report detailing the time, place, and children involved must be documented and submitted to the Committee.
- The Director and Committee President will meet with the person involved to allow them the opportunity to respond to the allegations.
- A decision will be made regarding further action, and the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) office will be contacted for advice, support, and completion of necessary paperwork.
- Management will liaise with the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services (DCSSDS) to ensure that the chain of evidence is preserved.
- Management will not conduct an internal investigation while the DCSSDS or Police are conducting their own.
- If necessary, the educator or staff member will be removed from any role involving contact with children until the authorities conclude their investigation.
- If Child Safety Services or the Police are not conducting their own investigation, or if their investigation has concluded, management may proceed with an internal review. This will include:
  - Giving the educator, staff member, student, or volunteer an opportunity to provide their version of events.
  - Documenting all details of the breach, including statements from all parties involved.
  - Recording the outcome clearly and objectively.
  - Maintaining confidentiality regarding all matters related to the breach.
  - Making a decision based on discussion and consideration of all evidence.

## **OUTCOME OF A BREACH IN CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

Staff members or educators who fail to adhere to this policy may be in breach of their terms of employment. Visitors or volunteers who fail to comply to this policy may face termination of their engagement. Depending on the nature of the breach outcomes may include:

- emphasising the relevant element of the child protection policy and procedure
- providing closer supervision
- further education and training
- providing mediation between those involved in the incident (where appropriate)
- disciplinary procedures if required including dismissal of employment
- reviewing current policies and procedures and developing new policies and procedures if necessary.

## **EDUCATING CHILDREN ABOUT PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOUR**

Our Centre is committed to empowering children with the knowledge and skills to protect themselves.

Through our program, children will learn:

- Their right to feel safe at all times.
- The difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, including appropriate and inappropriate contact, in an age-appropriate manner.
- How to say 'no' to anything that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable and to seek help from a trusted adult.
- How to recognise and express their feelings, both verbally and non-verbally.
- The difference between 'good' and 'bad' secrets and that no secret should be kept if it makes them feel uneasy.
- That educators are always available to listen and support them.
- The importance of reporting any suspicious activities or people.

To ensure children's safety and wellbeing, our Centre will:

- Foster an environment where children feel safe, heard, and respected.
- Clearly identify staff members and maintain appropriate supervision.
- Actively involve children in decision-making processes.
- Teach children strategies to manage their emotions and respond to unsafe situations.
- Take all concerns raised by children seriously and follow up appropriately.

By providing a secure and supportive environment, we equip children with the confidence and skills to protect themselves and seek help when needed.

## **Staff – Child Interactions**

- Staff will be trained to understand that they are likely to find some children's behaviour more difficult than others, to discuss these situations with other staff and the Director, and to devise strategies to minimise negative interactions with children.

- Individuals or groups of children will never be withdrawn into areas where they cannot be seen by other staff or taken into rooms that can be locked.
- There must always be two staff members on the premises during the opening hours, 7.45 am, and in the closing hours, 5.45pm; one of which will be a Certified Supervisor (in emergency situations this may not always be possible but will always try to be maintained).
- Students or volunteers are not to be alone with children or out of sight of other staff, or away from ready access by other staff.
- Staff are not permitted to have conversations of a sexual nature, have inappropriate pet names for children, make jokes of a sexual nature, use obscene gestures and/or language.

## Sources

[ACECQA. \(2023\). Embedding the National Child Safe Principles](#)

Australian Government Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2018). [Australian child protection legislation](#)

Australian Government: Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2023). [Mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect](#)

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Child Protection Regulation (2011)

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Queensland Government. *Blue cards for working with children*

<https://www.qld.gov.au/law/laws-regulated-industries-and-accountability/queensland-laws-and-regulations/regulated-industries-and-licensing/blue-card>

Queensland Government. Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women. *Child Protection Guide*.

<https://secure.communities.qld.gov.au/cpguide/engine.aspx>

Bravehearts <https://bravehearts.org.au/>

## Policy Review Record

Date	Management Committee Name	Nominated Supervisors Name	Review Cycle	Next Review Date
March 2025	Nicholas Whiteway	Tamara Fallon	Every year	March 2026