

Child Protection Policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff, educators, and volunteers understand their duty of care to protect children from harm. It provides a clear guide for recognising, responding to, and reporting suspected abuse or neglect. The Service seeks to create a culture of safety and inclusion, ensuring children are supported to feel secure, confident, and capable within the OSHC environment. All practices reflect our commitment to ethical standards, children's rights, and compliance with relevant legislation and national standards.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all management, staff, educators, volunteers, families, and visitors of the OSHC Service. It encompasses the care, supervision, and engagement of children while attending the Service and includes procedures for recognising and responding to child protection concerns.

Understanding child abuse

Child abuse is any action or inaction that harms or places a child at risk of harm, including their physical, psychological, or emotional wellbeing. Abuse may occur as a single incident or through repeated actions over time. Our Service recognises the different forms of abuse, including neglect, physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological harm. Additionally, exposure to domestic violence may constitute a form of child abuse, as it can cause significant physical, emotional, and psychological harm to children.

Indicators of abuse and neglect

Educators and staff are trained to recognise potential indicators of abuse. While the presence of a single sign may not confirm abuse, it may indicate a need for further observation and action. Indicators may include unexplained injuries, consistent patterns of distress or behavioural changes, and signs of neglect such as poor hygiene or inadequate supervision. Emotional and psychological abuse may be observed through persistent fear, withdrawal, low self-esteem, or inappropriate attention-seeking behaviours. Sexual abuse may be indicated through disclosures of inappropriate sexual behaviours, or physical signs in the genital or anal areas. Domestic violence may affect a child through anxiety, aggression, poor social skills, or reduced academic performance.

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Mandatory reporting

All staff and educators are mandatory reporters under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. This requires reporting any suspicion on reasonable grounds that a child is at risk of significant harm. Mandatory reporting obligations apply to educators, health professionals, welfare workers, law enforcement, and other designated professionals. Reasonable grounds may include firsthand observation, information disclosed by the child, or indirect evidence obtained through professional experience. Reports are made to the NSW Child Protection Helpline, and immediate action, including contacting emergency services, is required if a child is at immediate risk.

Notification of Serious Incidents

The Approved Provider must notify the Regulatory Authority of any serious incident occurring at the service within 24 hours of becoming aware of the incident. The notification must be submitted through the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA ITS) and supported by all required incident records and relevant information. Parents or guardians must also be notified as soon as practicable, but no later than 24 hours after the incident occurs.

Child protection training and educator responsibilities

All educators are required to complete approved Child Protection training and maintain current knowledge of mandatory reporting requirements. Staff are trained to recognise indicators of abuse, respond appropriately to disclosures, and understand their responsibilities to report to the Child Protection Helpline. Educators are expected to support children's safety, provide reassurance, and ensure that any disclosure is documented accurately without conducting independent investigations. Staff are guided by ethical principles from the ECA Code of Ethics, ensuring that children's rights, privacy, and dignity are respected at all times.

Documentation and confidentiality

All observations, suspicions, or disclosures of harm are documented accurately and in a timely manner. Documentation includes relevant details such as the child's identity, time and place of the observation or disclosure and the nature of the concern. Information is treated with strict confidentiality, and staff are not to inform suspected perpetrators. Documentation is essential to support investigations while protecting the child and ensuring evidence is not compromised.

Sharing of information

Sharing information about a child's safety and wellbeing is conducted lawfully, either through consent or under legislative authority. Information is shared only with prescribed bodies such as NSW Police, health providers, public authorities, schools, and organisations providing care, welfare, or education services. Sharing is always guided by the principle of acting in the best interests of the child while maintaining privacy and confidentiality.

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Reportable conduct scheme

The Approved Provider is responsible for complying with the Reportable Conduct Scheme, which requires notification to the Office of the Children’s Guardian of allegations or convictions of abuse involving staff, volunteers, or contractors. Investigations are conducted to ensure appropriate action is taken to prevent further harm. Staff are obliged to report any reportable conduct to the Approved Provider or relevant authority, and all matters are managed confidentially and in accordance with legislative requirements.

Protective behaviour education

The Service provides programs that educate children about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, their right to feel safe, and strategies to protect themselves from harm. Children are supported to identify unsafe situations, recognise feelings of discomfort, and communicate their concerns to trusted educators. Programs also teach children that there are no secrets they cannot share with someone they trust, and that educators are available to support them at all times.

Safe recruiting practices

All staff, educators, volunteers, and visitors undergo comprehensive recruitment checks, including a Working With Children Check, National Police Check, and reference checks specifically addressing child safety. Additional behavioural screening is conducted during recruitment to ensure that all personnel are suitable to work with children.

Use of mobile phones and technology

Educators are not permitted to use personal mobile phones during program hours. All documentation, photos, and records must be completed using work-issued devices. Children are not permitted to bring devices with camera or video functions, and educators must avoid wearing wearable technology with cameras while supervising children. Parents and carers are reminded that photos or videos of other children are not permitted unless prior written consent has been obtained.

Toileting and personal care procedures

Children requiring support with toileting or personal care are assisted in a manner that maintains their dignity and safety. An educator will not be left alone with a child during these procedures, and parents or guardians are contacted if assistance is needed.

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Breach of child protection policy

A breach of this policy occurs when actions or inactions fail to meet the duty of care owed to children. Management investigates breaches fairly and confidentially, providing all parties with the opportunity to explain events. Outcomes may include further training, mediation, closer supervision, policy review, or disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the breach.

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Review of policy

This policy is reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with current legislation, the National Quality Standard, and best practice in child protection. Staff and families are informed of updates to ensure ongoing understanding and commitment to child safety.

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Child Safe Standards and Paramountcy Principle

The Service is committed to upholding the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and embedding a strong child safe culture across all practices. In accordance with the Paramountcy Principle, the safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child are the primary and overriding consideration in all decisions, actions and practices undertaken by the Service, including all aspects of child protection.

This means that at all times, protecting children from harm, abuse and neglect must take precedence over all other considerations. Educators, staff and management are required to exercise professional judgement and take all reasonable steps to protect children from harm and hazards, including recognising indicators of abuse, responding appropriately to disclosures, and fulfilling mandatory reporting obligations without delay.

The Service will ensure that all child protection responses are timely, appropriate and in accordance with legislative requirements. Educators will support children in a calm, sensitive and respectful manner, ensuring that children feel safe to disclose concerns and are reassured that they will be supported and protected. All actions will be taken in the best interests of the child, with careful consideration given to their safety, dignity, privacy and emotional wellbeing.

Information sharing, documentation and reporting processes will be guided by the principle of acting in the best interests of the child, while maintaining confidentiality and complying with legal requirements. The Service will ensure that all decisions prioritise the protection of children and the prevention of further harm. All child protection practices must uphold children's rights, safety and wellbeing, ensuring that every child is protected, supported and able to feel safe at all times.



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Review

Date:	Changes:	Reviewed by:
26/11/2021	New policy (All updated)	Charmayne Nathan
17/09/2025	Safe recruiting practices, use of mobile phones, toileting and personal care procedures added.	Charmayne Nathan
23/04/2026	Child Safe Standards & Paramountcy Principle was implemented in align with new laws and regulations	Charmayne Nathan
17/09/2026	Updated Notification of 24 hour notification timeframe for serious incidents.	Charmayne Nathan