

Child Protection Policy

Rationale:

We are committed to advocating for children, their safety and wellbeing. This means protecting all children attending Otago University Childcare Association (OUCA) centres from abuse. The interests and welfare of children, alongside legal requirements, are our prime consideration when any decision is made about suspected abuse. To do this well, teaching and management staff need to be provided with appropriate training and support.

Definitions:

Child Abuse - The Oranga Tamariki Act, 1989, defines child abuse as "...the harming (whether physically, emotionally, sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation of any child or young person".

The following processes are detailed below:

1. Safety checking
2. Education and support
3. Supervision of children
4. Touching and professional behaviour
5. Process for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect
6. Designated staff responsible
7. Other relevant procedures/policies
8. Helpful resources

Procedures

1. **Safety Checking:** The following process is required by the Ministry of Education and will be adhered to.
 - a. All potential staff will be considered and treated as 'core workers' as per the Children's Act 2014. As a result, before any staff are employed by the OUCA the Manager will:
 - i. confirm their identity with an original primary identity document and a secondary identity document (usually passport and driver's licence),
 - ii. hold an interview with the applicant,
 - iii. obtain a work history,
 - iv. contact at least one (in the case of casual staff) but preferably two (two in the case of permanent staff) referees and undertake a referee check (see referee check), with one referee being a current employer,
 - v. check registration where staff are registered teachers, where they are not a Police vet will be carried out,
 - b. The Manager will assess the risk the potential staff may pose to the safety of children in the centres. In doing so it is preferable that staff have no prior convictions. If an employee does have a conviction the seriousness of the offence and time since the offence will be taken into consideration by the Manager in consultation with the Chairperson. Any offence involving assault or theft will immediately preclude employment by the Association.

- i. All registered teachers are Police vetted every three years by the Teachers Council. All other staff will be Police vetted every three years by the Manager.
- ii. The manager confirms the identity of all staff every three years and retains this on file.
- c. Volunteers over 17 years will be Police vetted and reference checked as above if they will have contact with children.
- d. Students studying or on practicum in our centres are Police vetted by their training provider. Students are accepted only once this has taken place. Prior to students starting in our centres the teacher working with them or head teacher will complete the Student Teacher/University Student Checklist with them.

2. Education/Support: Education and support of children, parents and staff:

- a. Reading material or other resources that give up to date information on recognising abuse will be available to kaiako.
- b. Kaiako will be supported to regularly participate in any available professional learning and development that will increase their knowledge and understanding of identification of, responding to and reporting of child abuse or neglect.
- c. The OUCA will support a working environment that is cognisant of the impact of, and responds to, the impact of personal and professional stress on individuals.
- d. Where staff have an issue of a personal or professional nature that could cause stress and may impact on their teaching, they will be encouraged to discuss this with their Head Teacher/Manager/Chairperson. The issue may be identified by the individual or a colleague. Professional counselling is available, for three consecutive sessions paid for by the OUCA, if required, to help with the issue.
- e. We will create, through the curriculum, an environment of trust, respect, open communication and confidence for staff, children, and parents.
- f. Parents are and will be encouraged to visit at any time during the day.
- g. Teachers will develop supportive relationships with parents and through these be available to provide respectful, non-judgemental advice and support. (e.g., access to parent library, referral to an agency or just a 'listening' ear).
- h. When abuse is suspected, the primary consideration will be the privacy of all parties involved (i.e. conversations about the incident will be strictly restricted to senior staff or other identified confidantes.)

3. Supervision:

- a. During the times that children are in attendance at a centre there shall be at least two staff present in that centre's licensed space.
- b. All playgrounds and indoor play areas are designed to ensure they can be readily supervised by kaiako.
- c. Staff and adults working/visiting the centre will be well supervised and visible in the activities they perform with children. Intimate care of children will be undertaken by their parents, whānau and permanent staff members (or casual staff and final year students at the discretion of the head teacher only).
- d. When children are being changed or toileted by staff, bathroom doors will remain open.

- e. Individual centres will develop supervision practices that ensure children are actively supervised at all times. These will take into account that children at times need a sense of privacy.
- f. No adult is permitted to be alone with a child/children outside the centre environs, except in an emergency or on school visits approved by the Manager. See excursion procedure.
- g. Any adults entering the centre/s who are not there to collect or drop off a child is required to seek permission to enter and then sign in and out as per the Health and Safety Policy.

4. Touching and professional behaviour

- a. Whilst it is appropriate to respond to a child who initiates physical contact in seeking affection or who needs reassurance or comfort, it is not appropriate to force any form of unwanted affection or touching on a child.

5. Behaviours that are of concern and reporting them

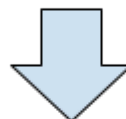
Where staff have concerns that child behaviour or interactions may indicate a child has been seriously harmed, has witnessed harm or it is suspected they are critically vulnerable they must immediately consult with their head teacher, Manager or Chairperson. Records will be kept and where appropriate external support will be sought. All allegations of child abuse or neglect will be taken extremely seriously.

Recognise:

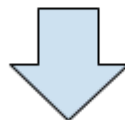
Any concerns you have regarding a child's safety, behaviour, bruises, or signs of abuse. When a family or staff member may need support. When you need support or advice about what to do next. Head Teachers and the Manager are designated staff able to provide support



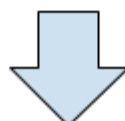
Record: Depending on the circumstances, documentation of the indicators of abuse should be carried out. A full and accurate written statement of the observation or disclosure will be made by the staff member and will be signed and dated. Support from the Head Teacher, Manager or Chairperson is always available.



Report: Any individual who suspects a child has been abused may respond by bringing their concerns to the Head Teacher, Manager, Chairperson or outside agency. The statement will be filed in a secure location to which only the Manager will have access until such time as the Manager deems it is no longer necessary to hold the information.



Refer: After evaluation by the Manager, or Chairperson of the OUCA, an outside agency, e.g., Oranga Tamariki, the Police or the Public Health Nurse, will be contacted. Recommendations will be followed. Where a referral is made, no further action will be taken by OUCA until advised by the outside agency. Parents/guardians will be notified by the Police, Oranga Tamariki, Public Health Nurse, not OUCA.



The OUCA will offer support to all those involved in any abuse allegations

The Manager is not obligated to release any information about a child to the child's parent/guardian if the Manager is satisfied that the release of the information and/or the reason for disclosure is not in the child's best interests. ((s29(1)(d) Privacy Act 2003 – Reasons for Refusal to be given unless to do so would prejudice the interest protected.)

Any staff member or parent has the right to contact Oranga Tamariki, the Police or the Public Health Nurse directly, if in the circumstances, they believe it is inappropriate to discuss their concerns with management.

Contact numbers:

Oranga Tamariki 0508326459;

Police 111;

Public Health Nurse 027 344 6457

Information about sexual behaviours in children can be found at:

[Traffic-LightsBrochure.pdf \(wbsass.com.au\)](#)

[Sexual Behaviour In Children & Young People | KidsHealth NZ](#)

Relevant Procedures/Documents:

- Staffing Policy and associated Procedures
- Protected Disclosures Policy
- Health and Safety Policy and associated Procedures
- Supervision procedures
- Cybersafety, Information, Communication and Technology Policy
- Early Childhood Collective Agreement

In the development of this policy and associated procedures we have referred to:

- Te Whariki
- Working Together to Support Tamariki, Rangatahi and their family/whanau. Oranga Tamariki. 2021.
- Children's Worker Safety Checking Under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014: Advice for interpreting and applying the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 and the Vulnerable Children (Requirements for Safety Checks of Children's Workers) Regulations 2015.
- Safer recruitment Safer children: Guidance for choosing safe people to work with children by Child Matters
- Education.govt.nz Vulnerable Children Act 2014 - early learning sector requirements.
- University of Otago. *Vulnerable Children Act Compliance Guide for Staff and Departments*
- Child Matters 2015 *How Can I Tell: Recognising child abuse.*

Reviewed May 2023