

4.14 Child Safe

POLICY STATEMENT

We want children who participate in our program to have a safe and happy experience. We support and respect our children, their families and our staff.

This policy aims to guide our staff on how to behave when interacting and engaging with children in our service.

The policy focuses on how we can build and maintain a child safe environment which is inclusive, transparent and promotes children's participation

CONSIDERATIONS:

The *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* makes certain occupations mandatory reporters of child abuse. However, anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child or young person is at risk of being neglected or physically, sexually or emotionally abused should make a report to the Child Protection Helpline. Remember that allegations of child abuse must be handed by professional. Call Family and Community Services Helpline on 132111 (24 hours a day 7 days a week) if you suspect child abuse or 133 627 (for mandatory reporters).

CHILDRENS PARTICIPATION

Our service supports the active participation of children in all our programs, activities and experiences.

We provide a wide range of ways for the children to provide feedback or raise concerns

We listen to their views, respect what they say and involve them when we make decisions, especially about matters that will directly affect them.

We aim to create an environment of trust and positive relationships where the children's voices are always heard and valued

RECRUITMENT

Our service will maintain a thorough, rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection process to ensure we employ suitable, responsible staff that have a commitment to the care and well being of all children.

Our Recruitment Process involves the following:

- Advertise using a range of mediums including Newspaper both local and national, Online Employment Agencies Eg: Seek Recruitment Agencies such as Hays Recruitment, Expect a Star and Randstad Education
- In depth interviews that require the candidate to answer a range of questions relating to their potential role and other workplace scenarios
- Attend a trial afternoon of 2 hours
- Check a minimum of 2 references

- Any candidate MUST provide a current working with children check
- New staff are placed on a 3 month trial period where they must attend a New Staff Orientation interview within the first few weeks to ensure they are following their Job Description and all other responsibilities as part of their role.

STAFF SUPERVISION

It is essential for the safety of all children at the service that the following is adhered to:

- Staff are supervised at all times during their employment and are regularly provided with information about what is inappropriate physical contact around children
- Staff are regularly reminded about their responsibilities in terms of being a Mandatory Reporter and how to make a report.
- Staff must be alert to the signs of Grooming or other inappropriate contact with children
- There must always be 2 staff on the premises at all times and no child should ever be left alone with a staff member under any circumstances
- In case of a parent running late the second last family must remain at the centre so that the child is not left alone with 2 staff members.
- Staff must lock their belongings in the lockable cupboard or Filing Cabinet including their mobile phone

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

Children and parents have the opportunity to raise concerns or make a complaint in a number of different ways, the centre also has a Child Safety Contact Person during all sessions of care that manages all complaints

- Children have the opportunity to right down any concerns they have through our Kids Letterbox "Have your Say" this allows the children to write notes about the program or other issues such as cooking activities, fundraising or anything that may be concerning them.
- Our Kids Questionnaire available next to the letterbox allows the children to describe anything that may be upsetting them or making them feel sad. This gives them the opportunity to write down their concerns if they feel uneasy about talking about it
- The centre implements a **Protective Behaviours Program** which helps the children develop personal safety skills to keep them safe and work towards reducing violence and abuse in our community.
- Open communication- Kids Club promotes positive and open communication between staff, children and their parents. We encourage children to approach staff at anytime to discuss anything that is on their mind
- All concerns and issues are addressed by our Child Safety Contact Person who will take the following steps when managing complaints:

CONCERNS MADE BY CHILDREN

It is important that children feel welcomed, comfortable and valued so they are at ease in talking to staff about their issues and/or concerns.

If a child comes to you with a concern you should-

- Find a safe and comfortable place within the centre of the child's choice to sit and have a chat about their concerns
- Ensure them that you are listening to them and that you understand what they are saying
- Reassure them that you will look into their concern and get back to them during the session
- Discuss with our Child Safety Contact Person and complete our "Child Safe Concerns/Complaints Record" to record all details including the date, issue/concern, persons involved, outcome etc. This record should be signed by the child's parent
- All information and discussions should be recorded until the completion of the process
- Reassure the child when they are at the centre that you are always available to listen to them and involve them where appropriate

CONCERNS MADE BY PARENT/CAREGIVER/STAFF MEMBER

Parents will be advised on the step by step process as described below:

- Any concern or complaint made by a child's parent/caregiver or staff member should be directed to the centres Child Safety Contact Person (CSCP)
- The CSCP will complete the centres "Child Safe Concerns/Complaints Record" to ensure all details are recorded correctly.
- The CSCP will reassure the carer or staff member that their concern is important and they will be back in contact with them for discussion within 2 days.
- Refer to our Child Protection Policy-any serious issues or concerns will be reported as required as Mandatory Reporters
The Mandatory Reporters Guide found on the link below will guide reporters on what action should be taken. The MRG is an interactive tool and is available online at: <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au>
- The centre will stay in communication with the Parent/Caregiver or Staff Member that has made the concern throughout the process until its duration. All information and discussions will be recorded

TRAINING, SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION OF STAFF

- We promote respect, fairness and consideration for all our staff
- All workers have a more senior staff member assigned to support and supervise their work

- All new workers will receive a copy of all child safe policies and procedures and the Coordinator or Assistant Coordinator will set up a meeting to discuss all policies and procedures allowing them to ask any questions or clarify their understanding before they begin in their position
- Child Safe is a standing agenda item at Staff Meetings and staff are encouraged to ask questions and contribute to the continuous improvement of child safe policies, procedures and practices in the workplace

LEGISLATION, INDUSTRY STANDARDS AND CENTRE POLICIES

- Child Protection (Working with Children Act) 2012
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- Recruitment Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- All staff must complete an Accredited Child Protection Course before beginning employment with any relevant updates completed during employment
- Online courses that offer staff revision on child protection and their responsibilities as Mandatory Reporters are completed regularly.
- A comprehensive Child Safe Folder is available to staff which includes:
 - ✓ Centres Child Safe Policy
 - ✓ Centres Child Protection Policy
 - ✓ Child Safe Concerns/Complaints Record
 - ✓ Fact Sheets for staff

COMMUNICATION

The centre will hold regular information sessions for all staff to remind them of their responsibilities and what to look out for

Our comprehensive Child Protection Folder including our centre policy along with Fact Sheets and Reporters information will be discussed during induction sessions for all new staff

Children and parents enrolling at the centre will receive a copy of both our Child Safe and Child Protection Policies.

REVIEW

Our Child Safe Policy and Child Protection policies and procedures will be reviewed every 18 months with comments and suggestions recorded from all our stakeholders (children, families and staff)

Any changes will be added to our policies, emailed to families and discussed with staff