



8. Child Protection Policy

8.1. Policy Statement

As an educator, it is our legal responsibility to uphold policies and legislations that promote the wellbeing of children in our care. It is our responsibility to protect an abused or suspected abused child. "Child abuse is any act of or omission of commission that endangers or impairs a child's physical or emotional health or development."

8.2. Policy Guidelines

- Child abuse and neglect are broadly described within seven categories. These categories can exist independently but commonly occur in combination with others. Each form of abuse has a range of indicators. However, one sign on its own may not suggest abuse. If you are concerned that a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, always seek advice from the Centre Manager / Authorised Supervisor.

Team members are made aware of child protection laws, the application of current law and the obligations that they may have under that law. This is conducted upon initial orientation into the service. Team members are required to have child protection training and this is part of the annual training plan of the service and is provided to the team. Child protection training will occur annually in all centres.

Part of your commitment to working legally and ethically with children involves safeguarding confidentiality. Children and their families have a right to expect that caregivers will keep information confidential. All documentation and information in relation to the child and the family that is held by the service/workplace must be treated as confidential. Educators should ensure personal information may only be accessed by, and exchanged with, team educating and caring for a child, or with authorised government departments who may require it.

Professional boundaries are essential for developing and maintaining safe and appropriate relationships with children and young people in care settings. Professional boundaries can be breached if a carer abuses their power and takes advantage of a child's trust. When interacting with children, professionals should be careful of engaging in certain behaviours with them and consider the implications and consequences of their actions at all times. Professional boundaries are those rules and limits that prevent the lines between carers and children from becoming blurred. Professional boundaries are set by legal, ethical and organisational frameworks to maintain a safe working environment for both the child, but also the caring team member too.

Examples of Professional Boundary Violations

- 1.Meeting the child or young person outside of the workplace
2. Using power or authority to harm them
- 3.Offering money to a child or young person
- 4.Buying them new clothing or gifts
- 5.Talking to them inappropriately or about personal matters
- 6.Using social media to interact with them outside of the workplace
- 7.Asking them inappropriate and personal questions
- 8.Offering them advice beyond your job role
- 9.Being more of a friend or counsellor to the child than your actual role
- 10.If you are considering helping a child or young person who is mistreated or disadvantaged, or offering them advice because they have come to you, you should discuss this with your supervisor first.
- 11.Be open and honest at all times.

8.3. Signs and Symptoms

1. **PHYSICAL ABUSE-** Physical abuse is a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child caused by a parent, caregiver or any other person. • bruising to face, head or neck, other bruising and marks which may show the shape of the object that caused it eg: belt buckle, hand print • lacerations and welts • drowsiness, vomiting, fits or pooling of blood in the eyes, which may suggest head injury • adult bite marks and scratches • fractures of bones, especially in children under three years old • dislocations, sprains, twisting • burns and scalds (including cigarette burns) • multiple injuries or bruises • explanation of injury offered by the child or young person is not consistent with their injury • abdominal pain caused by ruptured internal organs, without a history of major trauma •

swallowing of poisonous substances, alcohol or other harmful drugs • general indicators of female genital mutilation eg: having a 'special operation'

2. **EMOTIONAL ABUSE** - Serious psychological harm can occur where the behaviour of their parent or caregiver damages the confidence and self esteem of the child or young person, resulting in serious emotional deprivation or trauma. Signs or indicators of emotional abuse could include: • constant feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves • unable to value others • lack of trust in people • lack of people skills necessary for daily functioning • extreme attention-seeking behaviour • being obsessively eager to please or obey adults • taking extreme risks
3. **NEGLECT** - Child neglect is the continued failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child with the basic things needed for his or her proper growth and development, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care and adequate supervision. Signs or indicators of neglect could include: • low weight for age and/or failure to thrive and develop • untreated physical problems e.g. sores, serious nappy rash and urine scalds, significant dental decay • poor standards of hygiene i.e. child or young person consistently unwashed • poor complexion and hair texture • child not adequately supervised for their age • scavenging or stealing food and focus on basic survival • extended stays at school, public places, other homes • longs for or indiscriminately seeks adult affection • rocking, sucking, head-banging • poor school attendance
4. **SEXUAL ABUSE** - Sexual abuse is when someone involves a child or young person in a sexual activity by using their power over them or taking advantage of their trust. Often children are bribed or threatened physically and psychologically to make them participate in the activity. Child sexual abuse is a crime. Signs or indicators of sexual abuse could include: • bruising or bleeding in the genital area • sexually transmitted diseases • bruising to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs • child or young person or their friend telling you about it, directly or indirectly • describing sexual acts • sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate for the child's age • going to bed fully clothed • anorexia or over-eating • regressive behaviour e.g. sudden return to bed-wetting or soiling • self-destructive behaviour e.g. drug dependency, suicide attempts, self-mutilation • child being in contact with a known or suspected paedophile • adolescent pregnancy • unexplained accumulation of money and gifts • persistent running away from home • risk taking behaviours - self harm, suicide attempts.
5. **PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE** Psychological abuse is sometimes called psychological violence, or mental abuse, and is strongly linked to emotional abuse. It involves saying or doing things to make another person or child feel bad. It aims to cause emotional or mental harm and while it may not have physical signs, it can be painful and distressing. Signs or indicators of psychological abuse could include: • Embarrassing a child • Calling a child names • Threatening harm • Treating a child badly over things they cannot change, like being a girl • Ignoring a child
6. **PARENTAL ABUSE** Parental abuse occurs when a child (usually a teenager but sometimes a pre-teen) engages in behaviours that are abusive toward a parent. It may be a one-time incident, or it may escalate in frequency, even to the point of a daily occurrence. It can range from verbal abuse (for example, swearing at or threatening a parent) to intimidation, to outright physical assault. And although parental abuse is often associated with explosive anger and rage, the abusive behaviour may occur with no emotion: a quiet, deliberate act of harm used by a teen to maintain power over a parent.
7. **PRE-NATAL ABUSE** Pre-natal abuse is any deliberate behaviour that is known by the abuser to potentially damage the unborn child. This generally implies direct physical assault but could also include other behaviours including drug and alcohol misuse.

Domestic Violence - There are clear links between domestic violence and child abuse. Children who live in families where domestic violence is occurring are highly likely to suffer abuse.

Domestic Violence can be defined as the following; Domestic violence (also known as spousal abuse) occurs in unequal relationships where one partner uses power over another to dominate them and cause fear or psychological damage. Most domestic violence is against women.

Indicators of Domestic Violence.

Domestic and family violence involves a range of behaviours, from occasional instances of verbal abuse to serious threats, life threatening assaults, and homicide, and can include: Examples of indicators of domestic violence could include: Physical abuse, Sexual abuse, Emotional abuse, Verbal abuse, Social abuse, Damaging property, Financial abuse, Stalking and Intimidation.

8.4. Procedures to Follow with Reporting an Incident of Suspected Abuse/Sexual Behaviour in Children

1. Record the child's details as per the Suspected Abuse form.
2. Document EXACTLY what the child told you and/ or what physical signs you observed. Do not diagnose or assume the cause or result of the injury or behaviour, simply document.
3. Have the Centre Manager witness the record and verify it by co – signing.
4. The Centre Manager then retains the documentation.
5. The matter must always be considered fully. If necessary, discuss confidentiality with the team.
6. If felt necessary the matter will be broached with the parent or the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety and the Department of Education (Regulatory Authority). From here the team may be required to verify their records with the authorities and will then be excluded from the investigation unless requested.
7. The Child Protection Act -Child Protection Act 1999 can be accessed at <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1999-010>
8. <https://www.cyjma.qld.gov.au/protecting-children/reporting-child-abuse>. When you report a concern to Child Safety Services. You will be asked to provide information to help work out the best way to respond to the situation. It is important for you to call to report your concerns and to provide as much detail as possible. Even if you do not have all the details, your information may be critical in helping to keep a child safe. Your details are kept confidential and your identity is strictly protected. You are able to remain anonymous if you wish, however it is preferable for you to provide your details so that the officer can call you if information needs to be clarified.

Mandatory Reporting by Early Childhood Education and Care Professionals

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) professionals are now mandated by law to report child safety concerns to the department, where there is a reasonable suspicion that the child has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering, significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse, and there is not a parent willing and able to protect the child from harm.

ECEC professionals include team members from family day care, kindergarten, limited-hours care, long day care and after-school hours care. Individuals who are volunteers or under 18 years of age are not mandatory reporters.

ECEC professionals are not prescribed entities and cannot refer families to Family and Child Connect or an intensive family support service without their consent. If concerns about a family do not meet the legislative threshold for reporting to the department, ECEC professionals are encouraged to refer families to support services, with their consent.

Information resources are provided below to assist mandatory reporters and other professionals in better understanding when and how to report their worries regarding children's safety and wellbeing. The resources include four short videos and a range of information sheets and resources which cover aspects of child protection and prevention.

Information Resources

- [Presentation - Mandatory reporting by early childhood education and care professionals \(PDF, 1.1 MB\)](#)
- [Information sheet 1 – Mandatory reporting by early childhood education and care professionals \(PDF, 476 KB\)](#)
- [Information sheet 1 – Mandatory reporting by early childhood education and care professionals \(DOCX, 15 KB\)](#)
- [Information sheet 2 - The Child Protection Guide \(PDF\)](#)
- [Information sheet 2 - The Child Protection Guide \(RTF, 66 KB\)](#)
- [Information sheet 3 - Principal Child Protection Practitioner \(PDF, 84 KB\)](#)
- [Information sheet 3 - Principal Child Protection Practitioner \(DOCX, 15 KB\)](#)
- [Information sheet 4 - Sharing information with Family and Child Connect \(PDF, 161 KB\)](#)
- [Information sheet 4 - Sharing information with Family and Child Connect \(DOCX, 240 KB\)](#)
- [Information sheet 5 - What is Family and Child Connect? \(PDF, 205 KB\)](#)
- [Information sheet 5 - What is Family and Child Connect? \(DOCX, 244 KB\)](#)
- [Information sheet 6 - Frequently asked questions \(PDF, 495 KB\)](#)
- [Information sheet 7 - Understanding domestic and family violence \(PDF, 453 KB\)](#)
- [Information sheet 8 - Impact of parental substance misuse on children \(PDF, 351 KB\)](#)
- [Information sheet 9 - How to have a difficult conversation \(PDF, 365 KB\)](#)
- [Information sheet 10 - Understanding children's sexual behaviour \(PDF, 477 KB\)](#)
- [Family and Child Connect - information for professionals \(PDF\)](#)
- [A guide to reporting child protection concerns and referring families to support services \(PDF\)](#)
- [A guide to reporting child protection concerns and referring families to support services \(RTF, 168 KB\)](#)

9. Understand your reporting responsibilities-Prescribed matters - physical and/or sexual abuse of a child

- The Approved Provider must notify the regulatory authority of certain matters occurring while a child or children are being educated and cared for by the service.
- Any incident where you reasonably believe that physical and/or sexual abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring at the service.
- Any allegation that sexual or physical abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring at the service.
- Sexualised behaviour involving children-Providers and educators play an important role in making informed professional judgements regarding sexualised behaviour involving children. Not all sexual behaviour involving children poses a risk to their safety. It may be age-appropriate and expected sexualised behaviour.

Informed judgements regarding sexualised behaviour help to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children by:

- supporting healthy sexual development (age-appropriate sexualised behaviour)
- protecting them from harm or abuse (inappropriate or problematic sexualised behaviour).

Note that in some cases, sexualised behaviour involving children may fall within reporting requirements under other laws at the ACECQA Website.

<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/applications/reporting#reporting%20requirements%20under%20other%20laws>

- In the event you suspect a child protection concern, you are required to immediately notify the nominated supervisor and approved provider

10. The Queensland Child Protection Guide (CPG) is a tool to assist professionals' decision-making if concerns arise about a child who appears:
- to have experienced, 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 the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (Child Safety) or refer to other service providers, to help families receive appropriate support and services in a timely manner.

The CPG is intended to complement rather than replace an individual professional's critical thinking and does not prohibit a professional from any course of action they believe is appropriate.

- **CPG Child Protection Guidelines-** <https://secure.communities.qld.gov.au/cpguide/engine.aspx>

Professionals can use the Queensland Child Protection Guide (CPG) to decide to report to the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety or refer to other service providers, to help families receive appropriate supports and services in a timely manner. If you believe a child is in immediate danger or a life-threatening situation call Triple Zero (000).

If you have a reason to suspect a child in Queensland is experiencing harm, or is at risk of experiencing harm or being neglected contact Child Safety Services and talk to someone about your concerns:

- **During normal business hours** - contact the child safety regional intake service <https://www.cyjma.qld.gov.au/contact-us/departments-contacts/child-family-contacts/child-safety-service-centres/regional-intake-services>.
- If you have a reason to suspect a child in Queensland is experiencing harm, or is at risk of experiencing harm or being neglected, contact Child Safety Services Centres and talk to someone about your concerns: During normal business hours - contact your region's service centre. 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. Information on your nearest Child Safety Service centre can be found at: <https://www.dcssds.qld.gov.au/contact-us/departments-contacts/child-family-contacts/child-safety-service-centres>

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Employees and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

CREATING AND MAINTAINING A CHILD SAFE ORGANISATION

Child safe organisations require strong leadership. It is an ongoing process where all employees need to learn, monitor and review. While not all risks to children can be eliminated, following policies and procedures will reduce opportunities for harm to occur. Following the national principles along with implementing the child safe standards will maintain and improve their child safe practices.

Always be aware of your actions, and those of other adults, as children may misunderstand your intentions.

When changing a child's nappy or clothing inform other adults of what you are going to do. Be quick and return the child to the group as soon as possible. If working 1:1 with a child, avoid removing them from the rest of the group. Discuss routines and procedures with other adults at meetings or on an informal basis and review actions or behaviours. Become aware of various cultural differences in child rearing practices and adopt them as appropriate. Constantly give feedback to parents and be open with them.

8.5. Communicating Policy to Families, Children and Team Members

Information relating to the Child Protection Policy is communicated in the following ways: Newsletters, parent and Team Members handbooks, team meetings and memos, planned experiences for the children, notice boards and posters, pamphlets and information sheets in the foyer, role modelling and signs displayed around the classrooms and centre etc.

8.6. Policy Review Statement

All policies will be reviewed annually in consultation with Families, Team Members and Management. Any changes in legislation, regulations, Quality Assurance and other standards will be considered in the reviewing process. Any changes in policies or procedures will be communicated to families and Team Members verbally and in writing.

8.7. Policy Sourced and Retrieved From

1. National Quality Standard 2 Children's Health and Safety 2.3 -(2.3.4) - **4th April 2025**
2. National Regulations 168(2)(h), Regulation 84 Awareness of child protection law, Regulation 166 Children not to be alone with visitors Regulation 175 (d)(e), Prescribed information to be notified to Regulatory Authority - **4th April 2025**
3. <https://www.cyjma.qld.gov.au/protecting-children/about-child-protection/mandatory-reporting> - **4th April 2025**
4. <https://www.cyjma.qld.gov.au/protecting-children/reporting-child-abuse> - **4th April 2025**
5. <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/applications/reporting#prescribed%20matters> - **4th April 2025**
6. <https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/child-family/protecting-children/reporting-child-abuse> - **4th April 2025**
7. Refer to Policy 42. Child Safe Environment Policies and Procedures-42.8. Supervision Policy - **4th April 2025**
8. <https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/national-principles-child-safe-organisations> - **4th April 2025**
9. <https://secure.communities.qld.gov.au/cpguide/engine.aspx> Child Protection Guide - **4th April 2025**