

Te Aroha Noa Community Services

Child Protection Policy¹

1. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

- 1.1. Te Aroha Noa Community Services is committed to the care and protection of children and young persons. This commitment means that the welfare of children and young people is paramount. The safety and well-being of the child or young person comes before the interests of any other person (including when that person is known as part of our community) and will be given primary consideration when decisions are made concerning suspected or actual abuse.
- 1.2. This organisation is committed to this policy being made known and readily accessible within the organisation and annually evaluated and/or modified. All new staff, both salaried and voluntary, will be required to read and be aware of this policy. Training and education sessions will be run for staff and volunteers, to ensure that awareness of the policy and the issues raised in it are maintained. This policy applies to board, management, employees, students and people working under contract for Te Aroha Noa Community Services.
- 1.3. All allegations of abuse must be taken seriously and responded to promptly, taking guidance from this policy. Child protection concerns can also be related to a child indirectly involved with Te Aroha Noa Community Services (such as a sibling).
- 1.4. Worker Safety Checks will be undertaken as required by the Vulnerable Children Act 2014. Each Worker Safety Check will be repeated within 3 years of the previous one.

¹ A comprehensive and robust child protection policy demonstrates that Te Aroha Noa Community Services is committed to the prevention of child abuse and to the protection of children and recognises that keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility. This child protection policy provides the framework for Te Aroha Noa Community Services to create safe environments for children and ensures that the welfare and best interests of the child are the prime considerations when any decision is made about suspected child abuse or neglect.

Under the Children's Act 2014, Te Aroha Noa Community Services must have a child protection policy which:

- Is written
- Guides staff to identify and report child abuse and neglect
- Is reviewed a minimum of every three years
- Is made available on the Internet.

2.0 KEY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Always give priority to the safety and well-being of the child or young person. Take all disclosures seriously.
- 2.2 Write down what is said and/or observed as soon as possible.
- 2.3 Do not act alone. Report concerns immediately to the Practice Leader or to the CEO. This must be done within 24 hours.
- 2.4 Do not attempt to interview either the child or the alleged offender.
- 2.5 To contact Oranga Tamariki, Ministry for Children:
Phone 0508 FAMILY (0508 326 459)
Email contact@ot.govt.nz
- 2.6 If there is an immediate safety issue, the staff member should phone the Police.

3.0 CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSE: THE LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY

- 3.1 Confidentiality should be respected but has clearly defined limits.
- 3.2 Confidentiality must be broken if someone is at risk or is being harmed. While every effort will be made to inform the person disclosing first, others will be told if that person or someone else is likely to be or is being harmed.
- 3.3 Counsellors will advise their clients of the limits of confidentiality in the first session, as part of establishing the counselling contract. If a client subsequently discloses abuse, they are then aware that action must be taken to ensure safety.
- 3.4 If disclosure of abuse occurs outside a counselling setting, the person disclosing must be told that further action will be taken.

4.0 INFORMING FAMILY/WHANAU

- 4.1 Decisions regarding who should be informed and how this will happen, will be made in consultation with the CEO and Oranga Tamariki or NZ Police.
- 4.2 External support and or counselling such as EAP will be offered, if appropriate, if affected by this disclosure.

5.0 CULTURAL FACTORS

- 5.1 These policy guidelines are to be maintained at all times, but they should be followed in a manner sensitive and appropriate to the culture of the child/young person involved.
- 5.2 Advice may be sought from appropriate cultural resource persons or groups, but the principles of the policy are to be maintained at all times, and care must be taken with regard to confidentiality of the victim's identity and that of their family/whanau.

6.0 SUPPORT FOR STAFF INVOLVED IN REPORTING ABUSE

- 6.1 Te Aroha Noa Community Services is committed to supporting all staff, both paid and voluntary, who make a report of abuse. Reports must be made in good faith, and in accordance with this policy.
- 6.2 Dealing with abuse is never easy. If you are involved in reporting an allegation or disclosure of abuse, you could have a variety of reactions. You may feel shaken and upset. You may need to talk through the experience and your part in the process, to gain reassurance, or perspective and to share feelings. It is important that you seek any support you need. This could be from the CEO involved in the reporting process with you, who would refer you to an appropriate support service.

7.0 AUTHORITY TO REPORT ABUSE

- 7.1 Section 16 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 (Children's and Young People's Well-being Act 1989) provides legal protection from civil and criminal proceedings being taken against an individual or organisation that reports suspected abuse of a child or young person to lawful authorities *provided* the notification is made in good faith.

8.0 DEFINITIONS

- 8.1 **Abuse** – the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, neglect or deprivation of any child.
- 8.2 **Neglect** – the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs, leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development.
- 8.3 **Child** – any child or young person aged under 18 years, and who is not married or in a civil union.
- 8.4 **Child protection** – activities carried out to ensure that children are safe in cases where there is suspected abuse or neglect or the risk of abuse or neglect.

- 8.5 **Designated person for child protection** – the CEO or Practice Leader are responsible for providing advice and support to staff where they have a concern about an individual child or who want advice about the child protection policy.
- 8.6 **Disclosure** – information given to a staff member by the child, parent, or caregiver or third party in relation to abuse or neglect.
- 8.7 **Oranga Tamariki** – the agency responsible for investigating and responding to suspected abuse and neglect and for providing a statutory response to children found to be in need of care and protection.
- 8.8 **New Zealand Police** – the agency responsible for responding to situations where a child is in immediate danger and for working with Oranga Tamariki in child protection work, including investigating cases of abuse or neglect where an offence may have occurred.
- 8.9 **Physical abuse** – any acts that may result in the physical harm of a child or young person. It can be, but is not limited to: bruising, cutting, hitting, beating, biting, burning, causing abrasions, strangulation, suffocation, drowning, poisoning and fabricated or induced illness.
- 8.10 **Sexual abuse** – any acts that involve forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. Sexual abuse can be, but is not limited to:
- Contact abuse: touching breasts, genital/anal fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetrative or non-penetrative contact with the anus or genitals, encouraging the child to perform such acts on the perpetrator or another, involvement of the child in activities for the purposes of pornography or prostitution.
 - Non-contact abuse: exhibitionism, voyeurism, exposure to pornographic or sexual imagery, inappropriate photography or depictions of sexual or suggestive behaviours or comments.
- 8.11 **Emotional abuse** – any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development. This can include:
- Patterns of isolation, degradation, constant criticism or negative comparison to others. Isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child can also be emotional abuse.
 - Exposure to family/whānau or intimate partner violence.
- 8.12 **Neglect** – neglect is the most common form of abuse, and although the effects may not be as obvious as physical abuse, it is just as serious. Neglect can be:
- Physical (not providing the necessities of life, like a warm place, food and clothing).
 - Emotional (not providing comfort, attention and love).
 - Neglectful supervision (leaving children without someone safe looking after them).
 - Medical neglect (not taking care of health needs).
 - Educational neglect (allowing chronic truancy, failure to enrol in education or inattention to education needs).

- 8.13 **Worker Safety Checks** - Safety checking will be carried out in accordance with the Vulnerable Children Act 2014. This will include: a police vet; identity verification; references and an interview. A work history will be sought and previous employers will be contacted. If there is any suspicion that an applicant might pose a risk to a child, that applicant will not be employed.

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