

CENTRE PROCEDURES

46 Health and Safety Practices Standard: General

Licensing Criteria: HS31, HS32, HS33

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Purpose:

Treetops Early Learning Centres are committed to practices that keep children safe, ensuring that potential abuse and neglect, along with general concerns about child wellbeing, are identified and appropriately responded to. Treetops Early Learning supports families / whanau and staff to protect their children.

Treetops Early Learning believes in building a culture of child protection where child protection is open and accountable, understands the needs of children, makes their safety and security paramount and works in partnership with other agencies such as New Zealand Police (the police) and Oranga Tamariki in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected / alleged abuse to these agencies in order to meet the needs of vulnerable children.

We will support families when abuse is suspected and deal with the situation in partnership if possible.

Treetops Early Learning Centres, as an employer, will ensure staff members employed are properly risk assessed before employment and will ensure existing staff are given training to help them recognise the potential signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect and are given appropriate ways to respond. All staff are expected to be familiar with this policy and to abide by it.

Policy principles:

1. The interest and protection of the child is paramount in all actions.
2. We recognise the rights of family/whānau to participate in the decision making about their child/ren.
3. We have a commitment to ensure that all staff will be given training to help them recognise the signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect and are able to take appropriate action in response.
4. We are committed to supporting all staff to work in accordance with this policy, and with the relevant partner agencies i.e. Oranga Tamariki and others to ensure child protection is consistent and of high quality.
5. We will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities
6. We are committed to sharing information in a timely manner and to discuss any concerns about an individual child with the appropriate colleagues and Persons in charge.
7. We are committed to promote a culture where staff feel confident that they can constructively challenge poor practice or raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.

Guidelines:

Unless stated the Centre Manager is the designated person within each centre who is responsible for child protection.

Child Abuse: Includes physical emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect which is the direct consequence of a deliberate act or omission by an adult and which has the potential or effect of serious harm to the child.

Treetops Early Learning Centres adopt the protocol between The Ministry of Education and Oranga Tamariki for Early Childhood Education Services, 2010

- Physical Neglect – Not providing the necessities of life like a warm place, enough food and clothing
- Neglectful Supervision – Leaving children home alone, or without someone safe looking after them during the day and night.
- Emotional Neglect – Not giving children the comfort, attention and the love they need through play talk and everyday affection.
- Medical Neglect – The failure to take care of their health needs.

A child who is emotionally abused may show the following signs in addition to what you would expect to see from neglect:

- Sleep problems like bed wetting or soiling with no medical cause, nightmares and poor sleeping patterns
- Frequent physical complaints, real or imagined, such as headaches, nausea and vomiting, and abdominal pains. This might coincide with the child being very underweight or dehydrated.
- Signs of anxiety include poor self esteem, being unable to cope in social settings and sometimes obsessive behaviour. Children who are abused are very sad and alone and might talk about hurting themselves or ending their lives.

Physical abuse is any behaviour which results in physical harm to a child.

Signs to look out for are:

- Unexplained bruises, welts, cuts and abrasions – particularly in unusual places like the face, on their back or tummy, buttocks, or the backs of their legs. Also look out for the regularity of these injuries to see if there is a pattern forming.
- Unexplained fractures or dislocations – many children are active resulting in bumps or breaks, but people need to be thinking about how and why these injuries happen. Especially worrying are fractures to the head or face, and hip or shoulder dislocations. Be very concerned if this is happening in young babies, who are less active and not moving around enough to accidentally hurt themselves.
- Burn marks – anywhere on the body are concerning, and if not easily explained need to be notified. Be mindful of burns in the shape of an object like a stove ring or iron, cigarette marks or rope burn.

The following signs are an indication that a child may be being sexually abused:

- Physical indicators like unusual or excessive itching, bruising, lacerations, redness, swelling or bleeding in the genital or anal area, and urinary tract infections. Also be concerned and ask questions if there is ever blood in a child's urine or faeces, it's painful for them to go to the toilet.
- Age appropriate sexual play or interest and other unusual behaviour like sexually explicit drawings, descriptions and talk about sex can indicate this type of abuse.
- Fear of a certain person or place – Children might be trying to express their fear without saying exactly what they are frightened of, so listen carefully, and take what they say seriously.

Treetops Early Learning Centres ensure that they comply with relevant legislative responsibilities and undertakes the following practices to ensure the safety and the protection of children:

- Adherence to safe recruitment
- Adherence to approved staffing ratios
- Training of staff in Child Protection awareness and response procedures.
- Training and support of Centre Directors, Managers and Supervisors.
- Safety of the environment.
- Arrangements for intimate care.
- Existence of completed risk assessments
- Maintenance of incident reporting files including actions taken.
- Effective communication with parents and other carers.

Safe Recruitment

- All qualified staff will regularly be safety checked as part of their teacher registration process on a one year cycle. (Refer Safety Checking Policy).
- All Unqualified staff and volunteers will be safety checked through Treetops to meet the same standards and will be rechecked every three years (Refer Safety Checking Policy).
- Any safety checking that produces results' will be evaluated by the Centre Director, with the Centre Manager, for potential risks and consider suitability for employment. Refer Safety Checking Policy.
- In staff interviews applicants will be asked about their motivation to work with young children (who by definition are a vulnerable group).
- Students on placement will also have to show evidence provided by their tertiary education provider.
- Two independent referees will be sought for all job applicants and followed up by the interview panel.
- We require knowledge of any health issues including mental health that could impact a person's ability as

an educator/ leader.

- All staff will be required to sign a self disclosure form prior to acceptance of employment.
- We require knowledge of attendance, (voluntary or through the courts) on any behaviour management courses.
- We will seek a history of employment from all staff.
- All staff will have their identity checked with two forms of identification.

Adherence to Approved Staffing Ratios:

- Treetops Early Learning Centres are committed to safe working practice. As part of this, Centre Managers will ensure appropriate staff to children ratios are maintained throughout every day.
- Students and volunteers will be seen as being additional to permanent relieving staff.
- Centre Managers may spend time on the floor as this is part of good practice and to ensure ratios are maintained.

Training of staff in Child Protection awareness, response and procedures.

- Staff will receive the opportunity to attend Child Protection training every two years.
- Child Protection policy and procedure will be included in the induction process.
- All staff will be involved in the review of this policy and parents will be encouraged to participate also.
- Resources and advice will be available to all staff to ensure they can carry out their roles in terms of this policy.
- Parents/whānau will have access to information regarding a range of support agencies.
- We are committed to reviewing this policy annually and it will be available on Educa for consultation.

Safety of the Environment

Treetops Early Learning Centres are committed to providing a safe and friendly environment for the positive development of all children.

- At no time will volunteers, students, visitors, or parents perform care taking tasks with children or be alone with them (except for parents of their own children). This includes open door policies for private spaces where intimate care taking of children is required, e.g toileting, nappy changing and sleeping.
- If a child initiates physical contact in the seeking of affection, reassurance, or comfort it is appropriate to respond. It is not appropriate to force unwanted affection or touching on a child.
- In making physical contact with children, staff should be guided by the principle that they would do so only to meet the child's physical or emotional needs. Touching should never be initiated to gratify adults' needs. Children should not be asked to take care of adults' needs physically or otherwise.
- All practicable steps will be taken by the centre to ensure that children are not exposed to any violent or sexually explicit material. Centres will have processes in place around internet safety and the checking of magazines that enter the centre.
- Except in an emergency (and then that specific policy will be followed) Children are not taken from the service without parental approval, which is in writing and noted on their enrolment form.
- The Centre has a zero tolerance for the use of drugs or alcohol. We have policies in place to ensure that no staff member is under the influence whilst working in the Centre. If any parent arrives to pick up their child whilst suspected to be under the influence, staff will use their discretion to decide whether the child is safe to be driven by the parent. Staff can offer to call another family member to pick up the child if they see fit. If staff are at all concerned about the situation, police are to be notified, alongside the Centre Manager.
- Any staff member suspected of attending work under the influence of drugs (recreational) or alcohol will be stood down for the day. Disciplinary procedures will be followed to investigate the situation, complying with all relevant statutory obligations. Further investigation may lead to suspension or dismissal, with or without pay. Legal advice will be sought.
- All Centres will be strictly smoke-free and vape free at all times.

Arrangements for intimate care

- In order to protect children and staff from allegations false or otherwise, cell phones are not permitted on the floor especially not in changing areas as is the case with any other electronic devices with the ability to

take still or video images.

- Children should be changed in designated rooms adhering to the changing of children policy.
- Physical contact of children during changing or cleansing must be for the purpose of that task only and no more than is necessary. Encourage children to take care of themselves.

Parents/Caregivers/Whanau.

- Parents will be involved in the review of any child abuse prevention policies.
- This policy will be reviewed every year
- Parents will be encouraged to spend time in the centre and the participation of daily activities.
- Parents will have access to information regarding a range of support agencies.

Children

- Ongoing education of how children can keep themselves safe will be reviewed regularly.

Supervision Guidelines for staff

- The Centre will exclude any staff member, parent, family member or visitor to the centre from coming in contact with the children if they have reasonable grounds to believe the person has:
 1. Physically ill treated or abused a child or committed a crime against children
 2. In guiding or controlling a child
 3. Has subjected the child to solitary confinement, immobilisation, or deprived them of basic needs.
 4. Is in a state of physical or mental health that presents a risk or danger to children.
 5. Has an infectious or contagious disease or condition.
- Visitors to services should not perform care taking tasks with children or be alone with them. This includes open door policies for private spaces where intimate care taking of children is required, e.g toileting, nappy changing and sleeping.
- If a child initiates physical contact in the seeking of affection it is appropriate to respond. It is not appropriate to force unwanted affection or touching on a child.
- In making physical contact with children, staff should be guided by the principle that they would do so only to meet the child's physical or emotional needs. Touching should never be initiated to gratify adults' needs. Children should not be asked to take care of an adult's needs, Physical or otherwise. Children will be encouraged to become independent and to take care of their own needs, as able.
- Staff will ensure all children are treated equally. Any concerns with children under Oranga Tamariki care will be documented as per usual practice. Staff will remain positive and resume a neutral relationship between all party's parents involved in Oranga Tamariki.
- Except in an emergency (and then that specific policy will be followed) Children are not taken from the service without parental approval, which is in writing and noted on their enrolment form.

Staff working in the Centre are well supervised and visible in the activities they perform with children and will follow the below safe practices:

1. Sit or stand where you can see as much of the play as possible.
2. Be calm, alert and encouraging.
3. Encourage children to try for themselves and to get out of difficulties themselves.
4. Encourage children to take turns fairly and to cooperate.
5. Do not force children into play
6. Refer to Positive Guidance Policy for guidance practices that are acceptable to use when dealing with challenging behaviours.

The basic principles of responding to suspected child abuse:

- Take seriously what children tell you and what you see and ensure that the child is safe from immediate harm. Do not make decisions alone. Consult with your Centre Manager. If there is no short term risk, take

time to consult thoroughly in order to make a well informed decision.

- Written documentation of the incident / observation (include date, time, who was present and sign and name the document – Consult immediately with the centres / services contact person – if the concern relates to the contact person please contact the Centre Owners immediately.
- Always take action in the short term to ensure the immediate safety of the child. This will mean the service provider/ Contact person or persons responsible contacting the Oranga Tamariki service (0508 326 459) or the police. If advised to do so the police or Oranga Tamariki will provide a referral form for completion.

Managing the situation where a staff member has been accused of abuse – One person will take responsibility to see the process through which this decision will be made based on who the accused is.

- Where a staff member observes abuse taken by a staff member against a child, that staff member will be expected to address the staff member directly informing them to STOP what they are doing.
- Contact the Centre Manager or Director IMMEDIATELY.
- A detailed written account outlining the alleged abuse with the time, date and who was involved is to be forwarded to the Centre Manager or Director as soon as possible.
- Notify the staff member of the allegation and advise of potential consequences (no staff member is to act without the support of the Centre Director or Employers Assistance)
- Depending on the nature of the accusation the staff member under suspicion may be suspended on full pay while the matter is investigated, and they will be informed fully of their rights.
- Direct the accused staff member to organisations / people that they may gain support from, i.e Union Representative, family members etc.
- Maintain accurate records of your dealings with any agency or person(s) relating to the complaint
- Informing the parents and or caregivers of the child concerned will be determined by the police or OT in consultation with the centre.
- If there is a need to pursue an allegation as an employer, consult with Oranga Tamariki, NZ Police and (if relevant) notify MOE and NZ Teaching Council before advising the person concerned. Inform them that they have a right to seek legal advice and provide them with an opportunity to respond.
- Ordinary disciplinary policies will be followed, guided by our employment contract and relevant statutory obligations will be followed.
- Centre Director is to seek legal assistance before commencing any disciplinary action, aside from standing down the staff member immediately pending an investigation.

Guidelines for dealing with suspected abuse outside the service:

The Centre Manager/Director should do the following:

1. Ensure there are well documented observation statements regarding the suspected abuse.
2. Follow the advice of Oranga Tamariki or the police.
3. Ensure that there is no contact between the person whom the allegation is against and all children attending the service.
4. Suspected child abuse by parents: Where we suspect that child abuse has occurred and the child is unsafe we are committed to reporting the matter to Oranga Tamariki or the Police. When necessary we will ensure that we have the skills to help and support the parents as we present the information to them.

Staff Responsibilities – Specific Actions required when reporting child abuse / neglect

- If the child is in danger or unsafe, act immediately to secure their safety.
- Listen to the child and reassure them – write down what they told you but DO NOT formally interview the child, (necessary relevant facts for when clarification is required).
- Record the context and events you were made aware of surrounding the concern.
- Record any comments from other staff present when the suspected abuse or disclosure occurred.
- Do not take photos as this could interfere with police investigation and be seen as a breach of privacy. It is the role of the police to investigate
- If the child or young person is not in immediate danger and is not upset, reinvolve the child in usual activities.
- Get support for yourself from appropriate people.

- Support for designated persons will be provided by the Centre Director as well as access to external agencies.

Protection of Staff Members

Section 16 of the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989

Section 16 provides protection from prosecution for people making a report under section 15 and states:

“No civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings shall lie against any person in respect to the disclosure or supply, by that person pursuant to section 15 of this Act of information concerning a child or young person (whether or not that information also concerns any other person) unless the information was disclosed in bad faith”.

Treetops Early Learning Centres are committed to providing a safe working environment for all our staff and ensure that the employee's privacy is protected. We take all reasonable steps to ensure staff safety. The Centre will not disclose personal information (including personal address, phone numbers and personal circumstances) of any employee, to any child, parent or member of the public. Information will be kept secure in a locked filing cabinet in the office and only employees with specific authority will be permitted access to confidential employee information. Refer privacy Policy.

Deciding who and when will inform the parent(s) and or caregiver will be determined by Oranga Tamariki and police in consultation with the ECE service.

Confidentiality and information sharing

The Privacy Act 1993 and Oranga Tamariki Children’s and Young People’s Wellbeing Act 1989, allow information to be shared to keep children safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated. Note under sections 15 and 16 of the Act, any person who believes that a child has been, or is likely to be, harmed physically, emotionally or sexually or ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived may report the matter to Oranga Tamariki or the Police and, provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

- Education Regulations 2008 GMA7A
- Children’s Act Regulations 2014
- Oranga Tamariki Act 1989
- Children’s and Young People’s Well-being Act 1989
- Children (Requirements for Safety Checks of Children’s Workers) Regulations 2015
- Safer organisations Safer children – Guidelines for child protection policies to build safer organisations Children’s Action Plan 2015
- Child Protection 2016

Document ID	Child Protection
Link to policy	Safety Checking
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Appendix 1

Guidelines to assist – Child Protection Policy

Responding to a child when the child discloses abuse

Listen to the child	<i>Disclosures by children are often subtle and need to be handled with care, including an awareness of the child's cultural identity and how that affects interpretation of their behaviour and language.</i>
Reassure the child	<i>Let the child know that they are not in trouble and have done the right thing. While reassuring the child it is important that you do not agree 'not to tell anyone'.</i>
Ask open ended prompts, e.g. "What happened next?"	<i>Do not interview the child (do not ask questions beyond open prompts for the child to continue).</i>
If the child is visibly distressed	<i>Provide appropriate reassurance and engage in appropriate activities under supervision until they are able to participate in ordinary activities.</i>
If the child is not in immediate danger	<i>Re-involve the child in ordinary activities and explain what you are going to do next.</i>
As soon as possible formally record the disclosure	<i>Record:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Word for word, what the child said.</i> • <i>The date, time and who was present.</i>

Recording and notifying Oranga Tamariki of suspected child abuse or neglect:

What process to follow	For example	Key considerations
Recording	<i>Formally record:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Anything said by the child.</i> • <i>The date, time, location and names of any staff that may be relevant.</i> • <i>Factual concerns or observations that have led to the suspicion of abuse or neglect (eg. Any physical, behavioural or developmental concerns).</i> • <i>Action taken by the organisation</i> • <i>Any other information that might be relevant.</i> 	<i>Relevant information can inform any future actions.</i>
Decision-making	<i>Discuss any concern with the manager/supervisor or the designated person for child protection</i>	<i>No decisions should be made in isolation</i>

<p>Notifying authorities</p>	<p>Notify Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children, promptly if there is a belief that a child has been, or is likely to be abused or neglected. A phone call to the National Contact Centre is the preferred initial contact with Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children (see below) as this enables both parties to discuss the nature of the concerns and appropriate response options.</p> <p>Phone: 0508 Family (0508 326 459) Email: contact@mvcot.govt.nz</p>	<p>Oranga Tamariki will:</p> <p>I. Make the decision to inform the parents or caregivers, in consultation with our organisation.</p> <p>II. Advise what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the Police</p>
<p>Following the advice of Oranga Tamariki staff</p>	<p>Oranga Tamariki advice will include what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the Police</p>	<p>Oranga Tamariki is responsible for looking into the situation to find out what may be happening, whether our organisation needs to work with the family/whānau or put them in touch with people in their community who can help</p>
<p>Storing relevant information</p>	<p>Securely store:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The record of concern. ● A record of any related discussions ● A record of any advice received ● The action you took, including any rationale. ● This concern with any earlier concerns, if the notification is based on an accumulation of concerns. 	<p>Records assist in identifying patterns</p>

Schedule 1 – Full Definitions that apply to this policy:

Abuse – the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, neglect or deprivation of any child

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

Child – any child or young person aged under 17 years, and who is not married or in a civil union

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

Key person for child protection – the manager/supervisor or designated person 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

Disclosure – information given to a staff member by the child, parent or caregiver or third party in relation to abuse or neglect

Oranga Tamariki , Child, Youth and Family – 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

New Zealand Police – the agency responsible for responding to situations where a child is in immediate danger and for working with Child, Youth and Family in child protection work, including investigating cases of abuse or neglect where an offence may have occurred

Children’s services – any organisation that provides services to children or to adults where contact with children may be part of the service. These organisations should have child protection policies. Organisations that provide services to adults who may be caring for or parenting children should also consider developing a policy, e.g., adult mental health and addiction services

Safer recruitment – following good practice processes for pre-employment checking which help manage the risk of unsuitable persons entering the children’s workforce

Standard safety checking – the process of safer recruitment that will be mandatory for organisations covered by the Children Act 2014

Workforce restriction – a restriction on the employment or engagement of people with certain specified convictions under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014

Children’s workforce/children’s workers – people who work with children, or who have regular contact with children, as part of their roles

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.

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.

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.

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).*

Appendix 1: Report of incident:

Reporters details:

Name of person reporting	
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Position title	
Contact number	

What do the concerns relate to? (Please circle all that are applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosure from the child • Disclosure from someone else relating to the child • Possible indicators of concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern for staff members welfare • Observations relating to a staff member • An allegation against a staff member
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Childs details:

Child's full name	
Child's date of birth and age	
Child's residential address	
Are there any other children at this address?	
Does the child have any siblings? (include their DOB/age if known)	
Are there any additional needs to be considered?	Eg. Disabilities, language needs etc.
Name of preschool	

Details of the concern:

Please detail your concerns: Think: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When? • What? • How? • Where? • With who? What did you see/hear? Use quotes and the child's own words. Use the body map to reflect any physical indicators (describe indicators here)..	Date of incident:	Time of incident:
	Set the scene, describe what has happened and anything in particular that made you concerned.	
What happened after the incident? Note any actions taken and by whom.		

<p>Include what was said to the child or person sharing the concern or disclosure.</p>	
<p>Have you shared this concern with anyone else?</p> <p>If so, who?</p> <p>Were they told the full story or a summary? If different to what is documented above, what were they told?</p> <p>What actions were agreed on?</p>	

Body map of injuries/concerns:

