

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

### **Summary**

The North Canterbury RTL B Cluster (NCRTL B), along with the Lead School Board of Trustees has an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in their care so they thrive, belong, achieve and are safe. The NCRTL B Cluster is also committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all students in our care. The NCRTL B team are required to adhere to the Vulnerable Children's Act (2014) as it is intended to protect all children staff may encounter including other family members, the children of adults accessing our service and any other children encountered by staff under the guidance of the Lead School Board of Trustees.

### **Purpose**

This policy outlines our commitment to child protection and recognises the important role and responsibility of all our staff in the protection of children. It includes our protocols when child abuse is reported to us or suspected by us. The safety and wellbeing of the child is our top priority when investigating suspected or alleged abuse. It also includes measures to be taken to prevent child abuse. All staff are expected to be familiar with this policy and to abide by it.

We support the roles of the New Zealand Police and Ministry of Vulnerable Children – Oranga Tamariki in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected/alleged abuse to these agencies.

We support families/whanau to protect their children.

We provide a safe environment, free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse.

### **Policy Principles**

- The interest and protection of the child is paramount in all actions.
- The policy applies to all children who are clients of this NCRTL B, and to those with whom the team come in contact with in the course of their work with the NCRTL B service.
- We recognise the rights of family/whanau to participate in the decision-making about their children.
- We have a commitment to ensure that all staff are able to identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect and are able to take appropriate action in response.
- We are committed to supporting all staff to work in accordance with this policy, to work with partner agencies and organisations to ensure child protection policies are consistent and high quality.
- We will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.
- We are committed to share information in a timely way and to discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues, the child's school Principal (or other designated school personnel) and RTL B Cluster Manager.
- 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.

## Definitions

- A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18
- NCRTL B team is defined by those who are directly employed by Kaiapoi North School in the position of Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour.
- Child abuse: Includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect which is the direct consequences of a deliberate act or omission by an adult and which has the potential or effect of serious harm to the child.

## Related Documents

The Child Protection policy is used in conjunction with the following existing documents

- NCRTL B Complaints Policy
- NCRTL B Team procedures and operational manual (specifically health and safety procedures)
- The Privacy Act 1993
- Vulnerable Children's Act 2014
- Children, young Persons and their Families Act 1989
- Kaiapoi North School Appointments Policy

## Identifying possible abuse or neglect

Information on identifying possible abuse or neglect is detailed in '*Working together to keep children and young people safe. An Interagency Guide*' (Child, Youth and Family, 201, (Working Together)). This document should be read in conjunction with this policy: <http://www.cyf.govt.nz/documents/about-us/publications/27713-working-together-3-0-45ppi.pdf>

Another useful document for identifying 'Signs of Abuse and Neglect' is also available from Ministry of Vulnerable Children – Oranga Tamariki : <http://www.practicecentre.cyf.govt.nz/documents/knowledge-base-practice-frameworks/care-and-protection/pf-cp-resource-recognition-of-child-abuse-and-neglect.pdf>

In brief, you need to be aware of the indicators of potential abuse and neglect. The indicators as noted in Working together include:

Physical signs (Bruises, welts, cuts)	Behavioural Concerns
Developmental Delays	Child talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes called an allegation or disclosure)
Physical Neglect	Neglectful Supervision
Medical Neglect	Abandonment

Every situation is different and it's important to consider all available contextual information about the child and their environment before reaching conclusions. For example, behavioural concerns may be the result of life events, such as divorce, accidental injury or the arrival of a new sibling etc.

## Responding to suspected abuse or neglect

All suspicions or observed incidents or reports should be reported directly to the Person in Charge (in the case of a student in school this would be the Principal of that school or designated staff member) and/or RTL B Cluster Manager as soon as possible, who will immediately take steps to protect the child(ren), record the report and the concern to the statutory authorities, Ministry of Vulnerable Children – Oranga Tamariki or Children's Team Hub or Police (which ever is most appropriate)

If there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe an instance of child abuse having taken place, the Person in Charge shall notify the statutory authorities – Ministry of Vulnerable Children or Children’s Team Hub.

In addition to guiding staff to make referrals of suspected child abuse and neglect to the statutory agencies (i.e. Ministry of Vulnerable Children – Oranga Tamariki and the Police), this child protection policy will also help staff to identify and respond to the needs of the many vulnerable children whose wellbeing is of concern.

Our organisation recognises that in some cases the involvement of statutory agencies would be inappropriate and potentially harmful to families/whānau. There are a number of statutory and non-statutory agencies that provide a network of mutually supportive services and it is important that we work with these to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and families/whānau in a manner proportionate to the level of need and risk.

**Responding to a child when the child discloses abuse:**

Listen to the child	Disclosures by children are often subtle and need to be handled with particular care, including an awareness of the child’s cultural identity and how that affects interpretation of their behaviour and language.
Reassure the child	Let the child know that they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are not in trouble</li> <li>• Have done the right thing</li> </ul>
Ask open-ended prompts –e.g. “What happened next?”	Do not interview the child (in other words, do not ask questions beyond open prompts). Do not make promises that can’t be kept, e.g. “I will keep you safe now”.
If the child is visibly distressed	Provide appropriate reassurance and re-engage in appropriate activities under supervision until they are able to participate in ordinary activities.
If the child is not in immediate danger	Re-involve the child in ordinary activities and explain what you are going to do next.
If the child is in immediate danger	Contact the Police immediately
As soon as possible formally record the disclosure	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word for word, what the child said.</li> <li>• The date, time and who was present.</li> </ul>

**Recording and notifying Child, Youth and Family of suspected child abuse or neglect:**

What processes to follow	For example	Key considerations
Recording	Formally record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anything said by the child.</li> <li>• The date, time, location and the names of any staff that may be relevant.</li> <li>• The factual concerns or observations that have led to the suspicion of abuse or neglect (e.g. any physical, behavioural or developmental concerns).</li> <li>• The action taken by the organisation.</li> <li>• Any other information that may be relevant.</li> </ul>	Relevant information can inform any future actions.

Decision -making	Discuss any concern with the Person in Charge (either Principal of the school (if in school) or Cluster Manager or designated person for child protection.)	No decisions should be made in isolation
Notifying authorities	<p>Notify the Children’s Hub or Ministry of Vulnerable Children – Oranga Tamariki promptly if there is a belief that a child has been, or is likely to be abused or neglected.</p> <p>A phone call to the National Children’s Team Hub is the preferred initial contact as this enables both parties to discuss the nature of the concerns and appropriate response options.</p> <p>Phone: 0800 367 687 Email: <a href="https://viki.govt.nz">https://viki.govt.nz</a></p>	<p>The Children’s Team Hub will:</p> <p>Make the decision to inform the parents or caregivers, in consultation with the reporting organisation.</p> <p>Advise what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the Police.</p>
Following the advice of Child, Youth and Family	The Children’s Team Hub will include what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the Police.	The Children’s Team Hub 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.
Storing relevant information	<p>Securely store:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The record of concern.</li> <li>• A record of any related discussions (including copies of correspondence, where appropriate).</li> <li>• A record of any advice received.</li> <li>• The action the organisation (school or RTLB service) took, including the rationale.</li> <li>• This concern with any earlier concerns, if the notification is based on an accumulation of concerns (rather than a specific incident).</li> </ul>	Records assist in identifying patterns.

### **Allegations or concerns about staff**

When a staff member is suspected, the same processes apply.

If there is a need to pursue an allegation as an employer, consult with Ministry of Vulnerable Children –Oranga Tamariki or the Police before advising the person concerned, informing them that they have the right to seek legal advice and providing them with an opportunity to respond. They should also be informed of their right to seek support from the relevant union/representative body. It is vital to follow ordinary disciplinary policies, guided by the employment contract/collective employment contract and relevant statutory obligations.

We commit not to use ‘settlement agreements’, where these are contrary to a culture of child protection. Some settlement agreements allow a member of staff to agree to resign provided that no disciplinary action is taken, and a future reference is agreed. Where the conduct at issue concerned the safety or wellbeing of a child, use of such agreements is contrary to a culture of child protection.

### **Confidentiality and information sharing**

The Privacy Act 1993 and the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 allow information to be shared to keep children safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated. Note that under sections 15 and 16 of the CYPF 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 Children’s Team Hub, Ministry of Vulnerable Children – 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.

### **Recruitment and employment (safety checking)**

Safety checking will be carried out in accordance with the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 and Kaiapoi North Appointments Policy. 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.

### **Training, supervision and support**

Training, resources and/or advice will be available to ensure that all staff can carry out their roles in terms of this policy, particularly:

- Understanding child abuse and indicators of child abuse.
- How to reduce the risk of child abuse.
- Understanding and complying with legal obligations in regard to child abuse.
- Working with outside agencies on child abuse issues.
- Planning of environment and supervision to minimise risk.
- Dealing with child/parents/family/whānau.

This policy will be part of the initial staff induction programme.

### **Policy documentation and review**

This policy will be reviewed at least every 2 years.

Ratified by the Kaiapoi North Board of Trustees on 3rd April 2017