



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Child abuse and neglect are serious and complex problems that may occur in the lives of children. There is no simple explanation for why child abuse and neglect occurs. Rather, there are a number of interacting factors that increase the risk of a child being abused or neglected.

Reid Early Childhood Centre (RECC) is committed to the safety and well-being of children who attend the Centre. This includes supporting the application of the *Children and Young People Act 2008* ensuring that the Centre Director and all staff are advised of the existence and application of *The Act* and their obligations to promote the well-being, care and protection of children. This policy aims to outline the procedures for child protection matters including identifying, documenting, reporting and managing concerns or incidents.

DEFINITIONS

Child abuse is the term used for different types of maltreatment that endangers a child or young person's safety, wellbeing, and development. Child abuse can be a single incident or a chronic pattern of behaviour over time and may be intentional or unintentional.

Neglect refers to a failure to provide a child or young person with the basic needs for his or her physical, emotional/psychological and intellectual development and may be chronic or episodic in nature. Child abuse and neglect may lead to long term harm to the physical or emotional well-being and development of a child or young person.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The *Children and Young People Act 2008* provides for the prevention of abuse and neglect of children and young people, acknowledging the roles and responsibilities of government, parents and families, the community, and others who have responsibility for them including childcare centres.

Legally child care workers are mandated to make a 'Child Concern Report' to Care and Protection Services if they have reasonable grounds to believe a child is in need of protection. Outcomes of actions from which children are in need of protection include:

- A child discloses that he or she has suffered or is suffering non accidental physical injury or sexual abuse
- Someone else advises you that a child has been or is suffering non accidental physical injury or sexual abuse
- Your own observations of the child's physical condition or behaviours lead you to reasonably suspect that the child has suffered or is suffering a non accidental physical injury or sexual abuse

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It is in fact an offence for a mandated person not to make a report if they suspect abuse of a child. Similarly, it is also an offence if you **knowingly** omit or withhold information relevant to the allegations and by withholding this information the allegations are false or misleading.

It is important to note that the mandated reporter is not required to prove that abuse or neglect is or has occurred. They are simply raising their concerns so that further assessments can be undertaken.

EXCEPTIONS TO MANDATORY REPORTING

It is not mandated to make a report where someone else has made a report:

- about the same child in relation to the same suspected abuse or neglect; and the other person has reported the same reasons for their belief.

It is also not necessary to make a report if a person believes on reasonable grounds that:

- the child has experienced, or is experiencing non-accidental physical injury caused by another child or young person; and
- the child's parent/guardian is willing and able to protect the child from further injury.

PROCEDURE

If a staff member suspects or believes on reasonable grounds that a child attending the centre is experiencing or has experienced abuse or neglect, in the first instance they should discuss their concerns with the Centre Director to ensure a Child Concern Report is raised and submitted. Alternatively, if the matter requires emergency intervention the Centre Director will make contact directly with Police and relevant support services.

If a family of the centre suspects or believes on reasonable grounds that a child attending the centre is experiencing or has experienced abuse or neglect, they can also discuss the matter with the Centre Director or make contact with Care and Protection Services.

CONTACTS

Care & Protection Services Centralised Intake Services

General Public lin (24 hours)	1300 556 729
Mandated Persons line (24 hours)	1300 556 728
Mandated Persons fax line (24 hours)	02 6205 0641
Email address	childprotection@act.gov.au

Other important contacts

Police	000
Child and Youth Protection Services	132 281
Child Wise (Advise Helpline)	1800 991 099

INFORMATION REQUIRED WHEN MAKING A CHILD CONCERN REPORT

- name and date of birth of the child(ren) or young person(s)
- home address(es) of the child(ren) or young person(s) and any
- known previous addresses of the family
- current whereabouts of the child(ren) or young person(s)
- name of parents/aliases and contact details
- name of known siblings
- nature of suspected abuse and neglect
- known supports to the child, young person and family including extended family
- details about when and how you became aware of the information

IMPLEMENTATION

RECC provides all employees access to the child protection information folder (including current literature on this topic) which is available in the staff room. The RECC Director and Room Leaders encourage staff to check the folder regularly for updates and discuss any queries.

In addition, RECC staff are encouraged to raise general concerns regarding children's well-being at the centre's regular staff meetings. If the concern relates to a specific child, it should be discussed privately with the RECC Director.

POLICY REVIEW:

RECC will review the Child Protection Policy and procedures, and related documents, including behaviours and practices every 2 years as a minimum and on an as needs basis dependant if legislative changes. Children and families are encouraged to collaborate with the service to review all policy and procedures. Staff and educators are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be encouraged to be actively involved.

RELATED POLICIES:

Arrivals, Departures and Access to the Centre Policy

Behaviour Guidance and Management Policy Partnership with Families Policy

SOURCES:

Child and Young People Act 2008, available from www.austlii.edu.au

'Keeping children safe, a guide to reporting child abuse and neglect in the ACT', November 2014, available from www.communityservices.act.gov.au

Child Wise State Legislation and Reporting – ACT, available from www.childwise.org.au