



EOS Ecology Child Protection Policy

This policy outlines our commitment to child protection. It includes our protocols when child abuse or neglect is reported to us or suspected by us. It also includes practice notes on measures to be taken to prevent child abuse and neglect. All staff are expected to be familiar with this policy and to abide by it.

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1 Purpose Statement

We have an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care and are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all children. The safety and wellbeing of the child is our top priority when investigating suspected or alleged child abuse or neglect.

We support the roles of the New Zealand Police and Oranga Tamariki (Ministry of Vulnerable Children) (OT) in the investigation of suspected child abuse or neglect and will report suspected or alleged child abuse or neglect to these agencies.

We support families/whānau to protect their children.

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

2 Policy Principles

- » The interest and protection of the child is paramount in all actions.
- » We recognise the rights of family/whānau 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 child 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.
- » We will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.
- » We are committed to sharing information in a timely manner and to discuss any concerns about an individual child with Managers or the Managing Director.
- » We are committed to promoting a culture where staff feel confident that they can constructively raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.

3 Definitions

Child	Any child or young person aged under 18 years who is not married or in a civil union.
Child abuse	Includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse 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.
Neglect	Is the failure to meet a child's basic needs such as nutrition, housing, adequate supervision, education as well as medical and psychological care.
Child protection	Is the process of safeguarding individual children identified as either suffering, or likely to suffer, child abuse or neglect. It involves measures and structures designed to prevent, and respond to, child abuse and neglect.
Staff	Persons employed directly by or volunteer for EOS Ecology.

4 Identifying Possible Child Abuse or Neglect

The physical and behavioural signs, symptoms and history listed below, may indicate abuse or neglect. However, they are not specific to abuse or neglect. In certain situations, contexts and combinations they may indicate other conditions. All signs must be examined in the total context of the child or young person's situation.



THE CHILD

consider physical, emotional & sexual abuse & neglect

→ IDENTIFY DEVELOPMENTAL SIGNS

- global developmental delay
- specific delays: motor / attachment / speech & language, social / cognitive / vision & hearing / unusual developmental patterns

→ CHILD/FAMILY VULNERABILITIES

addictions / mental health / OT history / age of parents or child / attachment / disability

→ RECORD PARENT, CAREGIVER OR FAMILY SIGNS

exposure to family violence / unrealistic expectations / terrorising / corrupting / isolating / humiliating / dependency / closure / flight / unconcerned about child's wellbeing

→ RECOGNISE DISCLOSURE AS A SIGN OF ABUSE

Note: should not promise to keep it a secret

→ OBSERVE BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS

aggression / withdrawal / anxiety, fear & regression / sadness / overly responsible / obsessions / substance abuse / suicidal thoughts/plans / depression / poor social skills / attention-seeking

→ RECOGNISE PHYSICAL SIGNS

bruises & welts / cuts & abrasions / scalds & burns / fractures / head injuries / abdominal or stomach injuries / emotional/ psychological abuse / genital injuries / sexually transmitted infections / torn, stained or bloody underclothes / pregnancy / failure to thrive & malnutrition / dehydrated or malnourished / inadequate hygiene & clothing / poisoning / dressed inappropriately for weather or season / often extremely dirty

5 Responding to Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

A staff member may notice physical signs of child abuse or neglect, or observe signs of child abuse or neglect, or a child may report being abused. This staff member should immediately take steps to protect the child(ren). Once the child is considered safe from immediate danger, these concerns should be reported directly to the Managing Director (027 620 9566). The reporting person should prepare a detailed written report of the suspected child abuse or neglect and give this to their Managing Director (see the process to follow and information to collect/provide on the next page). The Managing Director will then contact either the Vulnerable Children's HUB (Canterbury only) or OT to raise their concerns about the suspected abuse or neglect. These statutory agencies will inform us as to whether we will need to submit a formal report. Please note one may opt to remain anonymous when making referrals of suspected abuse and neglect to statutory agencies.

Where appropriate, the person making the allegation will be given a copy of this policy.

6 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 the HUB or OT before advising the person concerned, informing them that they have a 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 representative body. It is vital to follow ordinary disciplinary policies, guided by the 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.



THE REPORTING PROCESS...

If you see a child being abused/neglected,
OR you observe signs of abuse/neglect in a child,
OR a child reports being abused/neglected.



IF THE
CHILD IS IN
IMMEDIATE
DANGER
CALL THE
POLICE
ON 111

1. RESPOND TO THE CHILD'S NEEDS:

- Ensure the child is safe from immediate harm.
- Attend to any physical or emotional distress in the child – take to hospital if appropriate.
- Listen to the child.

2. IMMEDIATELY INFORM YOUR MANAGING DIRECTOR (027 620 9566)

If the suspected child abuser is your Managing Director, contact the **HUB** (Canterbury ONLY) **0800 367 687** or **OT** on **0508 326 459**.

3. PERSON REPORTING THE CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT SHOULD PREPARE A WRITTEN RECORD TO INCLUDE:

- your name and contact details
- name of child/children concerned (including nicknames)
- name of people/organisations present
- date/time/place of observation/report of child abuse or neglect
- details of any physical/behavioural signs of child abuse or neglect
- what the child said EXACTLY
- ethnicity of child if known
- other significant background information
- any concerns for your own physical safety in making this notification i.e., anonymity.
- GIVE THIS TO YOUR MANAGING DIRECTOR

4. GATHER INFORMATION:

- Ensure the Managing Director will have a full report from the person who identified the child abuse or neglect.
- Get them to sign the report.
- Offer them any support needed.
- Tell them what actions you will take.
- Contact the **HUB** (Canterbury ONLY) **0800 367 687** or **OT** on **0508 326 459** and discuss concerns. These statutory agencies will tell you if you need to submit a formal report about your concerns.

7 Confidentiality & Information Sharing

The Privacy Act 1993 and the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act (CYPF) 1989 allow information to be shared to keep children safe when suspected child abuse or neglect 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, neglected or deprived may report the matter to OT or the Police and – provided the report is made in good faith – no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

8 Recruitment & Employment (Safety Checking)

For relevant positions, safety checking will be carried out in accordance with the Vulnerable Children Act (VCA) 2014. This will include: a police vet (under VCA); 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.



9 Training, Supervision & 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 neglect and indicators of child abuse and neglect
- » how to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect
- » understanding and complying with legal obligations in regard to child abuse and neglect
- » working with outside agencies on child abuse or neglect 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.

For permanent staff, they will be required to:

1. be police vetted under VCA
2. read through our child protection policy
3. read through relevant booklets (see below publications)
4. go on the "Working Together for Vulnerable Children" seminar – run by Child Matters
5. do a refresher after 3 years.

For non-permanent staff involved in projects where child protection is relevant, they will be required to:

1. be police vetted under VCA
2. read through our child protection policy
3. read through relevant booklets (see below publications).

10

Related Documentation & Review

Publications: "An interagency guide working together" – Oranga Tamariki

"How can I tell? Recognising child abuse" – Child Matters

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years.

Last review: 1 April 2019



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