



Child Protection Policy



Rationale

This policy acknowledges that early childhood education services have particular responsibility both under legislation and in society to provide a safe environment that ensures all children:

- Are treated with dignity and respect;
- Are free from physical, emotional and sexual abuse;
- Are entitled to physical and emotional well-being.

Te Whāriki: Well-being, Goal 3

Children experience an environment where they are kept safe from harm.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide guidelines and training for the staff at Hopscotch;
- Emphasise the safety of the child as stated in CYP&F Act 1989, Section 6 is paramount.
- Ensure that children, families and whanau are provided with preventative education to enhance their safety;
- Develop procedures for dealing with cases of current or past abuse;
- Identify external agencies to be used, the services they provide, the liaison required and the appropriate referral procedures.

Guidelines

1. The safety of the child must be paramount.
2. All staff and caregivers are responsible for the safety of children in their care.
3. Deciding who will inform the parent or caregiver will be the responsibility of the agency involved in consultation with the management and other protection services.
4. Professional ethics will provide the basis of all processes and actions taken. The privacy of those concerned must be respected.

Staff

1. Interviews will be carefully planned and carried out before an appointment is made.
2. All staff including temporary, casual, friends and volunteers will receive thorough pre-employment checking through police vetting and contacting previous employers.
3. The management of Hopscotch will facilitate training for all staff working with children, to help them recognise abuse and neglect, and to respond appropriately and accordingly.
4. We comply with the Safety Checking of Children's Workers under the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014.

Professional Agencies, Laws and Regulations

1. Hopscotch is familiar with the laws and regulations which serve to protect children from abuse.
2. Hopscotch maintains relationships with agencies and individuals in the community who are available to support and counsel staff and families (ie Otorohanga Family Support).
3. We do not assume responsibility beyond the level of our own expertise.

Responding to Child Abuse

Aim:

To ensure that all cases of suspected child abuse are responded to in a manner that will keep the child safe.

Implementation:

1. Staff will believe what children tell them and what they see.
2. Where we suspect that child abuse has occurred and a child is unsafe, we are committed to ensuring the immediate safety of the child. This will mean reporting the matter to the Police or the New Zealand Child Youth and Family Service (CYFS) - call centre telephone number 0508 326459.
3. Reassure the child. Do not make promises or commitments you cannot keep.
4. Staff will write down observations, impressions and communications which cause concern, keeping accurate paperwork, recording facts and dates. Information and record keeping will be kept confidential. However, staff priorities lie with the safety of the children, and management and the appropriate authorities will be informed about a case of suspected child abuse. Staff will avoid formally investigating the situation or interviewing the child and will obtain only necessary facts.
5. Staff will be encouraged to act on their concerns and not leave it to someone else or hope that it will not happen again.
6. No staff member will act alone regarding suspected child abuse, but will discuss with senior staff or management. If there is no short-term risk, time will be taken to consult thoroughly in order to make a well-informed decision.
7. Where we suspect that child abuse has been perpetuated by a staff member or other person assisting at the centre, we will report the matter promptly to the Licensee and statutory authorities. Staff members under suspicion will be suspended while the matter is investigated and they will be informed fully of their rights. Legal and professional advice and support will be made available to suspected persons. Staff will be advised and support made available.
8. Children, families, staff and others involved in the investigation of suspected child abuse will be offered support by agencies, individuals and organisations in the community.

Supervision

Aim:

To protect children from child abuse by staff members and other adults and to protect adults from unfounded accusations of child abuse.

Implementation:

1. Hopscotch ensures that its staff and other adults visiting or working in the centre are well supervised and visible in the activities they perform with the children.
2. Parents (other than staff who have children at the centre) should perform caretaking tasks with their own children only. Visitors and visiting students to Hopscotch are not to perform caretaking tasks with children.
3. Whenever possible, no staff member or other adult will be alone, or out of visibility of other staff members, with any child or children.
4. Open-plan building design and viewing windows into closed rooms allows for easy visibility.
5. Where possible, children will toilet themselves. If a child needs assistance with toileting, physical touching must be limited to assisting the child.
6. Permission will be sought from the parent/caregiver on the enrolment form for short walks. Written approval must be received from the parent/caregiver prior to an excursion other than short walks, including trips using transport, and the adult to child ratio endorsed. Wherever possible, a minimum of two adults will accompany children at all times.

Professionalism

1. Hopscotch encourages staff to keep their personal and professional lives separate.
2. Our child abuse policy is reviewed regularly by staff and management.

Family/Whanau Relationships

1. Hopscotch encourages parents, families and whanau to visit freely and to be involved as much as possible.
2. This policy is available to all parents, families and whanau.
3. If a parent or family member has concerns about the treatment of a child by our staff, they should speak to the Supervisor or Licensee, who will ensure that the matter is investigated and acted upon.

Preventative Education

1. Hopscotch believes that the education of children and parents is important in the prevention of child abuse. We encourage parents to make use of education programmes organised in the community.
2. Our curriculum provides opportunities for children to learn about keeping themselves safe.
3. Regular training ensures that staff are comfortable with responding to questions and answers from children.
4. Hopscotch will ensure that all practicable steps are taken to protect children from exposure to inappropriate material (for example, of an explicitly sexual or violent nature).

Points to Note

1. Documentation may subsequently be used in Court as evidence for either side. Avoid making judgements; simply record the facts.
2. Interviewing of suspected abuse victims is a specialised procedure best left to those who are trained in such techniques.
3. Do not attempt to contact an alleged abuser.
4. In the absence of the Licensee, refer immediately to the delegated authority for advice on further action.