



# CATHOLIC EDUCATION

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### ESTABLISHING A PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT

#### **POLICY STATEMENT:**

We aim to create an environment that minimises the risk of children being harmed in any way whilst in our care. We also aim to protect our staff from any possibility of any allegations of child maltreatment which could be falsely made against them.

#### **PROCEDURE**

In order to establish a protective environment for children and Educators at our centre we implement the following strategies.

##### **The Venue**

We aim to provide effective, active supervision of areas occupied by children through the following means:

- Ensure furniture/equipment is positioned in such a way so as good supervision is easily facilitated. (National Regulation 115)
- Ensure someone is available to notice and approach visitors as they enter the building.
- Develop risk assessments and supervision plans

##### **Visitors**

- Visitor/trades people will be screened when entering the centre to ensure that they have a valid reason to be on site.
- All visitors will be required to sign in and out as they arrive and depart.
- Unauthorised people will be asked to provide identification, preferably photo ID.
- Where the visitor is unable to provide appropriate ID the service may ask them to make an appointment and return at a later date. This will be dependent on the particular circumstances at the time, i.e. a parent who has popped in to see what the service is like with a view to enrolling their child, will not be turned away, and provided someone is available to show them around the service at that time. If the staff member is at all unsure about the person, they will be asked to return at a later date.
- Appointments will only be made with people who have a valid reason for being in the centre.
- All persons who may perform duties at the centre (paid or unpaid), will be required to present a current criminal record check and / or Working with Children Check. (*Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004*)
- If they do not have a WWC check they will not be left alone with the children and will be supervised at ALL times.
- Visitors will not be left alone with the children.

## **Recruitment and employment of Educators**

- The Nominated Supervisor will ensure that no Educators (including volunteers) working with children have a criminal history, outstanding charges pending, or outstanding warrant in relation to offences which may place children in their care at risk of abuse or inappropriate treatment. To this end all new and current Educators must provide a criminal record check or current assessment notice under the *Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004*. (See National Regulations 14, 16 and 48 also)
- Educators found to have an adverse criminal record check will be given the opportunity to discuss details with the employer to confirm the criminal conviction details are accurate and the circumstances of the conviction.
- If a prescribed offence as stated in the *Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004*, appears on the criminal record check, approval for employment must be obtained from the CEO of the Department for Local Government and Communities.
- All information obtained through criminal record screening will be treated in strict confidence (in accordance to our confidentiality policy) and only used to determine suitability for employment by the service.
- Within the Educators recruitment process the applicant's knowledge and experience of child protection issues will be determined (information regarding child protection will be available to new and existing staff and training will be offered as required).
- In keeping with National Regulation 84 all new Educators will be made aware of their obligations under current child protection law.
- Prior to any offer of employment, the applicant's referees will be contacted to further determine their suitability.
- All new employees will undergo an orientation into the service's child protection policies and procedures. Whenever possible new employees will have a period of time to work alongside current Educators to familiarise themselves with the children, parents, other staff and centre procedures, prior to taking up their new responsibilities in a full capacity.

## **Supervision of children**

- The premises is designed and maintained in way which facilitates supervision at all times whilst upholding children's dignity and rights. (National Regulation 115)
- Children will be supervised at a level appropriate to the age and needs of each child, the program, time of day and associated risks.
- Supervision of children away from the main play areas (i.e. toilets, cubbies, tunnels, quiet areas etc.) is carefully monitored.
- At times of the day when staffing are at a minimum (i.e. early morning, lunchtimes (Vacation Care) or late afternoon) Educators will be aware of the risks this creates, and will ensure they know the whereabouts of each other, and the children within the centre.
- Rosters are planned to ensure appropriate supervision of children is maintained and Educators on non-contact duties are replaced in order to ensure appropriate staffing levels. (See National Regulation 115 and 151).
- Educators will be aware that children have had different life experiences and are at different developmental stages so higher levels of supervision may be needed in certain circumstances (such as excursions, younger / older children playing together, child with additional needs).

- Children will only be released from the centre to authorised people as outlined in the delivery and collection policy.
- Educators will undertake appropriate consultation and referral regarding any concerns they may have about a child or children's behaviour.  
(Please refer to *Supervision policy* for more information)

### **Supervision and support of Educators**

- Child protection issues are discussed as required at staff meetings. Educators are encouraged to share any observations or concerns in regard to any child and Educators protection risks. Resolutions are sought to eliminate risks, and Centre Manager is advised of the issues and current strategies to resolve them.
- Educators will support each other to limit the time they are left alone with children.
- Volunteers and students will not be left alone with children at any time.
- Casual relief Educators will be rostered on to a middle shift where possible, to ensure someone is working with them at all times. When this is not possible, strategies will be implemented to minimise times when the relief person is working alone with any group of children.
- Educators will not leave the centre alone with individual children except in emergencies and in accordance with other centre policies.

### **Educator training**

- The centre requires all Educators to participate in some form of child protection training with relevant authorities. If this is not possible they will be provided with in service training and provided with support materials until the next training session is available. Our service will contact the Department for Local Government and Communities to ensure that training offered / recommended is the most up to date and appropriate. We will check the training.gov.au website as listed by ACECQA under *approved training*) This training should cover:
  - signs and symptoms of child maltreatment;
  - how to respond if a child discloses sexual abuse;
  - how to observe and record children's behaviour;
  - process of reporting child maltreatment to Department for Child Protection;
  - Department for Local Government and of Human services role in child protection issues.
- A guide to recognising signs of abuse or neglect (see appendix A) will be made available to all staff.
- All Educators are made aware at induction of the procedures they should follow if a child in their care displays behaviour or signs that could indicate abuse has taken place.  
(please see *Reporting Concerns of Abuse or Neglect* policy)
- The centre will ensure that Educators are made aware of current legislation and reporting requirements related to child protection and maltreatment and that a system for the reporting and recording of suspicious incidents is in place.
- Management will ensure they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in regard to child protection.
- All Educators are regularly reminded about the centre's policies, procedures, and confidentiality requirements in regard to child protection and any issues are discussed as appropriate.
- Educators are asked to read, sign and date after reading both this policy (*Establishing a Protective Environment*) and *Reporting Concerns of Abuse or Neglect*.

## **Children's Education**

- Educators will foster children's self-esteem and positive self-image through their interactions with children and other staff members at our centre
- Educators will encourage children to be assertive and to communicate their needs and concerns.
- Educators will role model assertive behaviour and language.
- Educators will talk with children about ways to keep themselves safe and encourage children to understand that they have a right to feel safe at all times.
- Educators will build relationships with all children based on trust, so that children know that it is safe to talk to them about any concerns/issues they may have. All staff will listen to them and reassure children that nothing bad will happen to them if they make a disclosure.

## **Information for parents**

- Educators will be available to discuss any issues with parents.
- The centre will keep parents up to date with any changes to child protection policies and seek their input. (National Regulation 172)
- The centre's policy on establishing a protective environment will be made available to parents.
- Parents will be informed about relevant training undertaken by Educators in the centre newsletter.

## **References**

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2012), *Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012*, ACECQA, NSW

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2012), *Education and Care Services National Regulations (WA) 2012*, ACECQA, NSW.

Child Wise – *Choose with Care – 12 Steps to a Safe Organization*. Retrieved on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 from <http://www.childwise.net/downloads/12Steps.pdf>

Children and Community Services Act 2004. Retrieved on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 from [http://www.slp.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/main\\_mrtitle\\_132\\_homepage.html](http://www.slp.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/main_mrtitle_132_homepage.html)

Department for Child Protection and Family Support *How do I recognise when a child is at risk of abuse or neglect?* Retrieved on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 from <http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/ChildProtection/ChildAbuseAndNeglect/Pages/Childabuseandneglect.aspx>.

Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act (2004) & Regulations (2005). Retrieved on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 from <http://www.checkwwc.wa.gov.au/checkwwc/Publications+and+Forms/Legislation.htm>

Professional Support Coordinator Alliance, *Policies for the NQF: Establishing a Protective Environment*. Retrieved on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 from [www.pscalliance.org.au/wp.../psca-establishing-a-protective-environment.pdf](http://www.pscalliance.org.au/wp.../psca-establishing-a-protective-environment.pdf).

## Further sources

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/>

Department of Communities and the Education and Care Regulatory Unit  
[ecru@dlgc.wa.gov.au](mailto:ecru@dlgc.wa.gov.au)

Department for Child Protection and Family Support  
<http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Pages/Home.aspx>

Protective Behaviours Program - <http://www.protectivebehaviourswa.org.au/>

National Privacy Principles - <http://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-act/the-privacy-act>

For more information relating to criminal history, go the *Education and Care National Regulations 2012*. (See regulations 14, 16, 22, 46, 48 and 154).

Last review	Next review
Aug 2017	Aug 2019 no changes
May 2019	Sources updated
May 2020	May 2020 no changes
May 2021	

## Recognising signs of abuse or neglect

Educators who have participated in training on child protection will find the following list of indicators of child maltreatment a useful reminder. Educators must remember, however, that the effects of child abuse and neglect are not always easy to identify. The following are just some of the general indicators of child abuse and neglect that you may observe in children.

**Indicators need to be considered in relation to a child's developmental stage, medical history and social context. While the indicators may not indicate abuse, they may be warning signs that something is not right for the child.**

	<b>Behaviours/conditions that could indicate signs of abuse</b>
PHYSICAL ABUSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has frequent or unexplained bruises or injuries eg. broken bones, scalds, scratches, bite marks.</li><li>• The child tells you he or she is being hurt.</li><li>• Has sudden or unexplained changes in mood or behaviour.</li><li>• Fear of adults (particularly familiar adults)</li><li>• Is startled or cringes when carer moves suddenly or unexpectedly.</li><li>• Difficulty in sleeping – nightmares.</li></ul>
EMOTIONAL ABUSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has low self-esteem.</li><li>• Becomes withdrawn or unresponsive.</li><li>• Has difficulty making friends or relating to their peers and/or adults.</li><li>• Speech disorders.</li><li>• Habitual self-comforting behaviours not consistent with developmental age eg thumb sucking, rocking etc.</li><li>• Is sometimes disruptive or aggressive towards adults or other children.</li><li>• Extreme attention seeking.</li><li>• Seems to lack trust in familiar adults.</li></ul>
SEXUAL ABUSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has a great deal of knowledge about sex at a very young age, or has sexual behaviour that seems beyond his or her years.</li><li>• Fear of having their nappy changed or being bathed.</li><li>• Bleeding from the vagina or external genitalia or anus, or signs of pain or discomfort.</li><li>• Self-destructive behaviour.</li><li>• Disclosure of involvement in sexual activity.</li><li>• Sudden avoidance of familiar adults or places.</li></ul>
NEGLECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dressed inappropriately for the weather.</li><li>• Poor standards of hygiene eg. dirty child, dirty clothes, unwashed hair.</li><li>• Poor health, failure to thrive, loss of 'skin bloom', poor hair texture.</li><li>• Delay in developmental milestones.</li><li>• Always hungry.</li><li>• Untreated physical problems.</li></ul>

