

Christchurch Resettlement Services  
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## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

**This manual is a living document that reflects**

- standards of good practice
- achievement of consistency
- requirements of relevant legislation
- aims and policies of Christchurch Resettlement Services

As a living document this manual will be reviewed annually.

# **Child Protection Policy - Contents**

1. Children and Young Person's Charter of Rights
2. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
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## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Ensuring the wellbeing and safety of children, including prevention of child abuse or maltreatment, is a paramount goal of CRS. This policy provides guidance to staff on how to identify and respond to concerns about the wellbeing of a child, including possible abuse or neglect.

- The process for responding to a concern about a child is on pages 5 & 6 of this policy.

The interests of the child will be the paramount consideration when any action is taken in response to suspected abuse or neglect. CRS commits to support the statutory agencies (Child, Youth and Family and the New Zealand Police (the Police)) to investigate abuse and will report suspected cases and concerns to these agencies as per the process in this policy.

The General Manager and where required, the Senior Social Worker as Second in Charge have overall responsibility for Child Protection policies and procedures within CRS. The GM will be responsible for the maintenance and annual review of this policy, in addition to carrying out the responsibilities outlined in this policy. Staff will not assume responsibility beyond the level of their experience and training. CRS commits to ensure staff have access to the training they need.

This policy was informed by a best practice Child Protection Policy provided by the Children's Action Network, and was modified by the General Manager Shirley Wright in June 2016 for CRS. A digital copy will be available on our website [www.crs.org.nz](http://www.crs.org.nz) from 01 July 2016. The policy will be reviewed in June 2017. It is consistent with Child, Youth and Family and Police guidelines, as well as the requirements of the Vulnerable Children's Act.

### **Purpose, scope and principles**

Our child protection policy supports our staff to respond appropriately to potential child protection concerns, including suspected abuse or neglect. It is CRS' commitment to protect children from abuse and to recognise the important roles all of our staff have in protecting children.

This policy provides a broad framework and expectations to protect children, including (but not limited to) staff behaviours in response to actual or suspected child abuse and neglect. It applies to all staff, including volunteers across the 6 distinct but complementary service areas of CRS. It is intended to protect all children and young people that staff may encounter, including siblings, the children of adults accessing services and any other children encountered by staff as they provide their service.

In addition to guiding staff to make referrals of suspected child abuse and neglect to the statutory agencies – i.e., Child, Youth and Family and the Police – this policy will also help our staff to identify and respond to the needs of the many vulnerable children whose wellbeing is of concern.

We recognise that in many of these cases, the involvement of statutory agencies would be inappropriate and potentially harmful to families/whānau. Throughout New Zealand statutory and non- statutory agencies provide a network of mutually supportive services, and it is important for our organisation to 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. CRS ensures that clients are connected to any service or support that will enhance their safety and wellbeing, and especially to the Canterbury Children's Team where the child/family meets the vulnerability criteria..

To ensure that this organisation demonstrates continual improvement in child protection practice, we will work to maintain a good working relationship with child protection agencies and support our staff to protect children from abuse by consulting with experts with specialist knowledge and providing the necessary training options.

We also commit to explore opportunities to work with other providers, including from other sectors, to develop a network of child protection practice in our community.

This policy applies to all staff, including contractors and volunteers.

## Definitions

- **Child** – any child or young person aged under 17 years and who is not married or in a civil union.
- **Child protection** – activities carried out to ensure that children are safe in cases where there is suspected abuse or neglect or are at risk of abuse or neglect.
- **Designated person for child protection** – the manager/supervisor or designated person responsible for providing advice and support to staff where they have a concern about an individual child or who want advice about child protection policy.
- **Disclosure** – information given to a staff member by a child, parent or caregiver or a third party in relation to abuse or neglect.
- **Child, Youth and Family** – the agency responsible for investigating and responding to suspected abuse and neglect and for providing care and protection to children found to be in need.
- **New Zealand Police** – the agency responsible for responding to situations where a child is in immediate danger and for working with Child, Youth and Family in child protection work and investigating cases of abuse or neglect where an offence may have occurred.
- **Physical abuse** – any acts that may result in physical harm of a child or young person. It can be, but is not limited to: bruising, cutting, hitting, beating, biting, burning, causing abrasions, strangulation, suffocation, drowning, poisoning and fabricated or induced illness.
- **Sexual abuse** – any acts that involve forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. Sexual abuse can be, but is not limited to:
  - **Contact abuse:** touching breasts, genital/anal fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetrative or non-penetrative contact with the anus or genitals, encouraging the child to perform such acts on the perpetrator or another, involvement of the child in activities for the purposes of pornography or prostitution.
  - **Non-contact abuse:** exhibitionism, voyeurism, exposure to pornographic or sexual imagery, inappropriate photography or depictions of sexual or suggestive behaviours or comments.
- **Emotional abuse** – any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development. This can include:
  - Patterns of isolation, degradation, constant criticism or negative comparison to others. Isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child can also be emotional abuse.
  - Exposure to family/whānau or intimate partner violence.
- **Neglect** – neglect is the most common form of abuse and although the effects may not be as obvious as physical abuse, it is just as serious. Neglect can be:
  - Physical (not providing the necessities of life like a warm place, food and clothing).
  - Emotional (not providing comfort, attention and love).
  - Neglectful supervision (leaving children without someone safe looking after them).
  - Medical neglect (not taking care of health needs).
  - Educational neglect (allowing chronic truancy, failure to enrol in education or inattention to education needs).

## **Training**

We are committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse through appropriate training. As part of their induction, new staff are made aware of the policy on child protection.

### **Identifying child abuse and neglect**

Our approach to identifying abuse or neglect is guided by the following principles:

- We understand that every situation is different and it's important to consider all available information about the child and their environment before reaching conclusions. For example, behavioural concerns may be the result of life events, such as the refugee and/or acculturation experience, parental ill health, death of a parent/family member, separation from family remaining in refugee camps/country of origin, etc.
- We understand when we are concerned a child is showing signs of potential abuse or neglect we should talk to our senior worker and or manager – we do not act alone.
- While there are different definitions of abuse, the important thing is for us to consider overall wellbeing and the risk of harm to the child. It is not so important to be able to categorise the type of abuse or neglect.
- It is normal for us to feel uncertain, however, the important thing is that we should be able to recognise when something is wrong, especially if we notice a pattern forming or several signs that make us concerned.
- Exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) is a form of child abuse. There is a high rate of co-occurrence between IPV and the physical abuse of children.

We recognise the signs of potential abuse:

- *Physical signs* (e.g., unexplained injuries, burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases).
- *Developmental delays* (e.g., small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills).
- *Emotional abuse/neglect* (e.g., sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness and evidence of self-harm).
- *Behavioural concerns* (e.g., disengagement/ neediness, eating disorders/substance abuse, aggression).
- The child talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes called an allegation or disclosure).

We are aware of the signs of potential neglect:

- *Physical signs* (e.g., looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight).
- *Developmental delays* (e.g., small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills).
- *Emotional abuse/neglect* (e.g., sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness and evidence of self harm).
- *Behavioural concerns* (eg: disengagement neediness, eating disorders/substance abuse, aggression)
- *Neglectful supervision* (e.g. out and about unsupervised, left alone, no safe home to return to)
- *Medical neglect* (e.g. persistent nappy rash Or skin disorders or other untreated medical issues)

Each situation is different and staff will consider all available information about the child and their environment before reaching conclusions.

CRS will always act on the recommendations of statutory agencies, including Child, Youth and Family and the Police.

When we respond to suspected child abuse, we will document our observations, impressions and communications about any concerning behavior in the client file.

Staff responding to cases of suspected child abuse will be supported by their supervisor, Manager and externally if required..

### **Confidentiality and information sharing**

We will seek advice from Child, Youth and Family and/or the Police before identifying information about an allegation is shared with anyone external to the agency. Staff should be aware that:

- Under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 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 Child, Youth and Family or the Police and provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.
- When collecting personal information about individuals, it is important to be aware of the requirements of the privacy principles – i.e., the need to collect the information directly from the individual concerned and when doing so to be transparent about: the purposes for collecting the information and how it will be used; who can see the information; where it is

held; what is compulsory/voluntary information; and that people have a right to request access to and correction of their information.

- Staff may, however, disclose information under the Privacy Act/Health Information Privacy Code where there is good reason to do so – such as where there is a serious risk to individual health and safety (see privacy principle 11/Code rule 11). Disclosure about ill-treatment or neglect of a child/young person may also be made to the Police or Child, Youth and Family under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989, and the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.

### **Child safe practice guidelines**

To avoid situations where staff may be alone with children, children are only supported within the context of the family. Face to face support time with young people can be provided in a public space, eg: the Library, 298 Health Centre. Parents remain responsible for their children when visiting the CRS office, and no child will be transported by CRS staff without a responsible family member, except in the case of an emergency – these occasions need to be reported to the General Manager and/or Senior Staff member...

Visitors should be monitored at all times by staff and volunteers and outside instructors should be monitored by staff, eg: at the CRS Youth camp.

CRS does not provide any activities that require one to one physical contact.

Staff should avoid being alone when transporting a child or young person, unless an emergency requires it. Except in an emergency, children and young people are not to be taken from our organisation's premises, or from the programme we provide, without written parental consent.

### **Reporting of care/protection concerns**

Christchurch Resettlement Services recognizes and upholds the right of paramountcy of the child as outlined in section 6 of the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989.

#### **Practice:**

Staff who have concerns about the safety or well being of any child or young persons who are clients of Christchurch Resettlement Services must take the following action:

- Discuss concerns with the Senior Social Worker, or in this persons absence, with the Manager
- A decision must be made as to whether to notify the Child, Youth and Family Agency. If the decision is to notify Child Youth and Family the Social Worker will wherever practicable, discuss this referral with the family prior to making the notification.
- If this is not practicable, or the concerns are urgent, the notification must be made without the family's knowledge. Wherever practicable the family will be notified immediately following an urgent referral.
- Non-disclosure to Parents : If disclosure of the notification to CYF to parents or parent is assessed as creating more risk to the child/ren or other parent, the social worker in conjunction with the SSW or Manager is able to not disclose. This decision and the reasons for it needs to be fully documented in the client's case file.
- The Social Worker must ensure full compliance of information to Child Youth and Family, and also that the case notes reflect this notification. The case notes must clearly show whether the family has been notified and if not, the reason for this.
- The Senior Social Worker (or Manager) must record the notification and decisions taken with Social Worker.



- Cases of notification to Child Youth and Family should be tracked by way of ongoing social work intervention and through weekly risk management social work meetings.
- A register will be kept in the Christchurch Resettlement Services Office of all Child, Youth and Family notifications.
- All notifications/care and protection concerns need to be discussed with the Manager

### **When an allegation is made against a member of staff**

All matters involving allegations against staff need to be escalated to the General Manager immediately.

To ensure the child is kept safe, management may take steps to remove the staff member against whom an allegation has been made from the environment, subject to the requirements of the applicable individual or collective employment contract and relevant employment law.

### **Disclosure/allegation of child abuse by a staff member**

- Listen to the child/or person making the allegations, and help create a safe space for them to disclose.
- Notify the General Manager.
- Reassure the person making the disclosure that the allegation will be followed up to the full extent of the CRS policies and person's employment contract..
- General Manager to consult with Child, Youth & Family or the Police.
- Management to refer to the relevant employment contract and to the CRS Board as a Risk Issue
- Child, Youth and Family or management to advise employee and seek a response (depending on outcomes of discussions with statutory agencies.)
- Employee will be advised of their right to seek support/advice from union or other appropriate representatives.
- Management to contemplate removal of employee from active engagement with clients, subject to the employment contract.
- Management to maintain close liaison with Child, Youth and Family or the Police.

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.

Policy to be reviewed annually by General Manager and Senior Staff