

Abuse and Protection Policy

Purpose

Safety and protection from abuse, exploitation and neglect is central to our kaupapa and is everyone's business.

This policy outlines the steps Whaiora staff must take to prevent and respond to concerns and disclosures of abuse. The safety, interests and wellbeing of tamariki impacted by abuse and neglect will be treated as paramount.

Scope

This policy applies to actions by management and employees, and includes students and people working under contract for this organisation.

Responsibilities

The board has a primary and overarching duty of care for health and safety in the organisation.

Management will:

- ensure team members are trained to implement this policy (eg trained in signs of abuse, reporting and responding to safety and child protection concerns)
- follow up appropriately on abuse concerns
- take all reasonable and practicable steps to correct any systemic deficit that could contribute to abuse or non-detection of abuse
- lead an organisational culture that:
 - models respect for dignity and rights to safety and equality
 - promotes zero tolerance for abuse
 - promotes early intervention and reporting of abuse concerns by clients, staff and volunteers.

Kaimahi will:

- comply with this policy and related procedural requirements for service delivery

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- act professionally at all times and desist from any abusive or harmful action against another
- communicate this policy and behavioural expectations to clients/whānau and their supports
- report abuse concerns and any deficit in knowledge, systems or processes that could contribute to abuse or prevent detection of abuse
- cooperate in the investigation of alleged abuse.

Definitions

Rangatahi refers to a young person who is under 18 years of age.

Principles

- The safety and wellbeing of those affected by abuse and neglect is the first priority of any response.
- Young people have a right to participate in decisions that concern them unless this is unsafe or impracticable.
- Reporting serious harm and risk to rangatahi to Oranga Tamariki and Police is more important than maintaining confidentiality about it. Disclosure to other authorised persons may be justified in certain circumstances.
- Those who are abused, neglected or exploited are not responsible for perpetrators' behaviour.
- Prevention and response strategies must be sensitive to developmental stage and age, disability, culture, gender and sexuality preferences.
- Concerns about harm including allegations against kaimahi and volunteers will be taken seriously and appropriately followed up.
- We do not act alone when responding to a child or young person who has been harmed or is at risk of harm.
- People can be vulnerable to abuse for a range of reasons (eg age, care dependence; have a communication disability) and particular care should be taken to ensure their safety from abuse.

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Prevention

The mahi of Whaiora involves supporting and strengthening whānau wellbeing.

Kaimahi/volunteers will be trained in identifying and responding to [common signs and indicators of abuse and neglect](#).

Kaimahi/volunteers understand there will be disciplinary consequences, including dismissal, for child abuse or abuse of a client.

Kaimahi will be police vetted/ child safety checked.

Kaimahi/volunteers will use safe practices in interactions with rangatahi.

Provide information

Information will be provided to rangatahi and whānau to assist prevention and early detection of abuse, as necessary.

The information must be given in an accessible way and assist understanding of:

- the different types of abuse
- how to recognise the signs
- how to report abuse, neglect and exploitation
- parenting support options and strategies
- how and who to access for support internally and externally if abuse occurs
- that Whaiora may share relevant information about abuse with authorized agencies to help prevent and protect a child or other person from abuse
- Whaiora has an obligation to prevent and report abuse.

Reporting

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If there is concern that a child or other person is, or is at risk of being abused or neglected (eg an intimate partner or family member or kuia), staff must consult with their manager.

If, they remain concerned after discussion with management, the kaimahi should notify Police (vulnerable adult) or Oranga Tamariki (rangatahi). The Suspected Child Abuse should be used.

If a child or other person is at immediate risk of harm, it may be necessary to immediately contact police on 111 and Oranga Tamariki on phone 0508 326 459 immediately.

Staff will also consider whether information about the harm should be shared with other authorised services involved with the person/whānau eg informing a family violence service of a threat from a spouse.

Record of Allegation

All allegations, information, observations and communications about abuse must be recorded within 24 hours of receiving or identifying abuse.

The record must be factual and objective and entered in either the Family Start or MedTech database.

The case notes must be referred to the relevant Line Manager immediately.

Recording will include:

- completing Suspected Child Abuse and register
- the circumstances in which a disclosure was made or how concerns has arisen
- type of abuse/neglect suspected/Issues
- who noticed the abuse and their relationship to the client
- who reported the alleged abuse and their relationship to the client
- physical, behavioural and emotional signs
- action taken once a disclosure or concern about abuse arose including any medical attention
- a proposed plan of action and networks involved

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- if a report of concern is made to Oranga Tamariki a copy of the acknowledgement letter from Oranga Tamariki will be placed on the child/children's file by the Kaimahi.
- a record of Suspected Child Abuse or and Register will be kept in a safe place in the office.

Allegations of abuse against staff

- Safety of children and young people is paramount.
- Staff members suspecting child abuse by a colleague must immediately notify their Line Manager or, if unavailable, the General Manager.
- Concerns must be recorded in writing.
- Within 24 hours of being notified of a case of suspected abuse, the Line Manager must notify the General Manager. All disciplinary action taken must be in accordance with the HR Policies and only taken after consultation with the General Manager and a Human Resource Advisor.
- The staff member concerned must be informed in writing that an allegation has been made of behaviour that might constitute serious misconduct and the person may need to be suspended while an investigation takes place.
- A meeting to discuss the allegation and possible suspension should be held as soon as possible, with the staff member able to have a support person present. The staff member's views on suspension will be sought and considered before a decision to suspend is made. The decision to suspend will be reviewed and authorised by the General Manager or their designated manager.
- If a decision is made to suspend, the kaimahi must be given a letter advising of this before he/she leaves the site.
- Whether or not suspension occurs, contact with the rangatahi will cease immediately until the matter is resolved and only be resumed if it is in their best interests.
- If the investigation establishes that there are reasonable grounds for believing child abuse has occurred, the General Manager will report the matter to the Police.

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If a case of child abuse is established, it will constitute serious misconduct and the employee will be called in to a meeting to inform them of their immediate dismissal without notice. This will be followed up with a formal letter.

System issues

Policies and practices will be periodically reviewed to identify and check for gaps, which may contribute to or mean risks of child abuse are undetected. Appropriate corrective action will be taken as necessary.

Accountability

"Settlement agreements" will not be used if an abuse allegation is substantiated against a team member and the agreement would be contrary to protecting tamariki from abuse.

Compliance

- Social Sector Accreditation Standards Level 2, Community wellbeing 2.-21.-3.0
- Children's Act 2014 *In pursuit of wellness*
- Health and Disability Commissioner (Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights) Regulations 1996
- Family Violence Act 2018
- NZS: 2021 Our Rights, Criteria 1.5.1-2
- Cornerstone Indicator 16.1

Related

Background and Child safety checks

Respect in the Workplace policy

Forms

[Suspected Child Abuse Form](#)

Sign off

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Libby Trafford	Following Policy Review Project	
Office Manager		
Signature/ Position 	Date: 20/04/2022 TKT Hui	Next review date: Feb 2023

Review

Signature/ Position	Date	Next review date

