

2:9 CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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RATIONALE

Let's Grow believe that children need to be in an environment where their rights are protected from injury (physical and mental) abuse, neglect or maltreatment.

Teachers play an important role in detecting, reporting and preventing child abuse because of the time they spend with the children, their access to families, their training and professional responsibilities. All teachers will need to ensure that they familiarise themselves with this policy and its updates annually.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Child Abuse means the harming (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child.

Let's Grow is committed to the care and protection of children. Their interests and welfare are paramount when any decision is made about suspected abuse.

The following are the Centre's principles when cases of child abuse or neglect are suspected:

- At all times children will be safeguarded against the possibility of child abuse, while in the care of the Centre.
- Any child suspected of suffering from abuse will receive prompt attention.
- All concerns will be acted upon.
- We will believe what the child tells us, and what we see, rather than what adults say.
- No staff member or caregiver will deal with incidents of suspected child abuse without the consultation and support of the Management.
- We will not work alone with children, that is, there will always be two adults on the premises.
- All information will be recorded factually and accurately, as soon as possible.
- Information will be given on a need to know basis.
- We will give appropriate support to families.
- We will support the role of the Police and/or Child, Youth and Family.
- We will not investigate the child (only Child, Youth and Family and the Police have the mandate to investigate).
- We will not question or counsel the alleged offender.

- We will release any records sought by Police or Child, Youth and Family under legislative or other authority.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

- Parents/Carers are welcome to come into any part of the Centre at any time. We are proud of the warm, gentle relationships we have with the children and are happy to be observed doing our work.
- All staff are supported, supervised and trained on appropriate procedures and given information about positive guidance, children's safety and the prevention of abuse.
- Staff are required to get assistance and to withdraw from the situation if they become stressed by a child's behavior.
- Children's bodies are treated with respect and dignity within the Centre. Staff will endeavor to be sensitive to a child's need for privacy from others, while avoiding being in a compromising situation. We feel it has become necessary to teach children to keep their bodies private in a group setting. Children must wear clothing at the Centre and are encouraged to take responsibility for managing their own physical needs, as is age appropriate e.g. wiping bottoms.
- Whenever possible children are given opportunities to make decisions and to have their choices respected.
- The Centre programme includes providing children with information about issues such as 'good/bad touching', 'good/bad secrets', 'yes/no feelings' and the importance of telling. This is done in a relaxed gentle way and includes such things as encouragement to express feelings and reading of relevant stories.
- No child can leave the Centre premises without written permission from their parents, except in cases of emergency.
- All practicable steps will be taken to protect children from exposure to inappropriate material (for example, of an explicitly sexual or violent nature).

For example:

- Any computers in the Centre will have internet access blocked or appropriate filtering applied.
- All books and materials will be physically viewed as to appropriateness.
- Any videos/dvd's or music will be viewed or listened to beforehand.
- If any concerns are raised by a child, their family, a staff member or other adult, they will be carefully listened to and appropriate action taken. Everyone is welcome to talk to the Management.
- References of prospective staff members are carefully checked. Referees are contacted verbally and asked questions about the applicant and their relationships with children. All staff will be Police Vetted upon employment, and every three years thereafter.
- Students, scheme workers, visitors, trades people, and volunteers are supervised in their work and are never left alone with children.
- When children leave the Centre premises for outings and excursions, all Centre policies and practices around Supervision still apply, and additional measures are put in place to ensure the safety of children and staff. See Regular Outings & Excursions and Special Outings & Excursions Policies.

- Any person under the influence of alcohol or any other substance that has a detrimental effect on their functioning or behavior will be asked to leave the premises immediately. Police will be called for assistance, should this become necessary.
- Any person who is deemed in an unsuitable state to pick up a child, or who is an unwanted person within the centre, staff will use the following phrase with other staff members to alert them to the situation 'I'm just going to put the jug on'.
- Any person that is in a state of physical or mental health that presents any risk of danger to children will be excluded from the centre.

STAFF

- Programmes will be provided to staff to show them ways to keep children and themselves safe.
- Opportunities will be made available for staff training, in recognising and responding to child abuse, so that they are comfortable with responding to questions from children.
- Resources are available for staff, parents and children.
- Staff will NEVER smack, hit, push, grab, shake, handle roughly, bite or pinch a child back, shout at, threaten or confine any child. These methods are illegal in an Early Childhood setting, and have proved to be bad for children in care. Children learn acceptable behavior from positive example and love, not from violence and anger. Even if they believe in some of these methods and/or use them at home, Staff will not do so in the Centre. Any staff member who does so, will have disciplinary action taken against them, as per their Employment Agreement.
- If the staff are concerned about a child or their behavior, they will follow the procedure detailed in this policy.
- If the staff discover any unusual bruises or marks, or a change in a child's behavior, staff will record it in the staff 'worry book' to observe and follow up and then report if needed.
- If a staff member is concerned about another staff member, parent or other adults dealings with a child or their behaviour towards a child, they will follow the procedure detailed in this policy.
- As per their Employment Contract, staff under the influence of alcohol or any other substance that has a detrimental effect on their functioning or behaviour will be asked to leave the premises immediately, and disciplinary action will be initiated (see Staff Policies & Practices).
- Job applicants work history will be checked and contact will be made with both referees and past employers, with the applicants consent. In choosing staff we require skills and attributes that will enhance the children's' development and safety. A thorough interview process will be undertaken when employing staff. Police checks will be carried out. Temporary Staff, casual staff and volunteers will be police checked and will not be left alone with the children without a staff member present.

PARENT AWARENESS AND SUPPORT

- The Centre will help in the prevention of abuse by supporting families in a sensitive manner and sharing information about parenting discipline, children's development and behavior, danger signals and support groups.
- Parents, caregivers, and staff should be aware of personal safety and of not placing themselves in compromising situations, or situations that could be misinterpreted.

- The Centre encourages parents to visit freely and be involved in Centre life as much as is possible.
- If any adult has concerns about the treatment of a child by our staff/volunteers or anyone else that comes in contact with their child while they are in the care of the Centre, this concern should be made known to the Management immediately. The matter will be investigated and acted upon. The identity of the person expressing concern will be kept confidential, unless required to be disclosed to the appropriate agencies.
- Parents should feel free to discuss any queries or concerns with the Manager.
- A policy for dealing with complaints or non-compliance is displayed on the parent's notice board. If you have any concerns or complaints relating to the operation of our Centre please refer the matter to Management.

CHILD ABUSE INVESTIGATION

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

- The interest and protection of the child is paramount in all actions.
- If any person (parent or staff) has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, their first obligation (after ensuring the child is in no immediate danger) is to immediately advise the Management WITHOUT DELAY.
- The Management will contact the Police and/or Child, Youth and Family WITHOUT DELAY if the situation is deemed serious.
- All matters related to individual cases are confidential to those directly involved and should under no circumstances be discussed with other staff, other parents, children or any other person in or outside of the Centre, unless specified to do so by the Management. Failure to observe this procedure of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action being taken.
- Full and detailed written records (see below) are to be kept (as directed by the Management) of every related discussion or act or incident, from the first instance of suspected abuse (see below).
- Staff are not to assume responsibility for action or advice beyond the level of their own expertise.

RECORDING OF INCIDENTS OR CONCERNS

Recording will be done as soon as possible after each observation or communication. Memory can be unreliable. Recording clarifies thinking and enables accountability.

All recording will be:

- Written
- Factual
- Accurate
- Timely
- Concise
- Signed and dated

The record should reflect:

- The seriousness of risk to the child
- What appropriate follow-up action is required
- Who will be responsible for actioning the decision made

Information should include:

- Type of abuse suspected
- Who noticed the abuse, and their relationship to the child
- Signs and symptoms, for example, physical, emotional, sexual, and behavioral
- Particular incidents with dates, times and places if possible
- Action taken (Report to Police and/or Child, Youth and Family).

These records will be:

- Written individually, to ensure one child's records are not seen along with any others
- Stored securely in the Management's locked cabinet (which only they have access to)
- Destroyed by shredding along with the rest of the child's records, as per MOE directives, at the appropriate time.

INTERVIEWING

Under NO circumstances should a child be questioned beyond that which he or she voluntarily discloses. Any disclosure should be recorded as soon as possible.

Care must be taken not to ask leading questions, or undertake actions which are more properly suited to a specialist or Child, Youth and Family or the Police.

The Centre's responsibility is to:

- Gather information
- Consult
- Record
- Ensure that the child is safe
- Refer the matter to the appropriate authorities
- Continue to observe the child, as a follow up procedure, while they remain in our care

All actions will be completed within a time frame, which takes the best interests of the child into account.

WHEN TO CALL IN WHAT AGENCY?

If it is clear from information or investigation that there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe of an instance of child abuse having taken place the Management team shall notify an appropriate outside agency ie CYF or NZ Police.

However Management are able to contact the national contact centre on 0508 FAMILY (0508 326459) and discuss your concerns and anonymously if you are unsure if your observations constitute abuse.

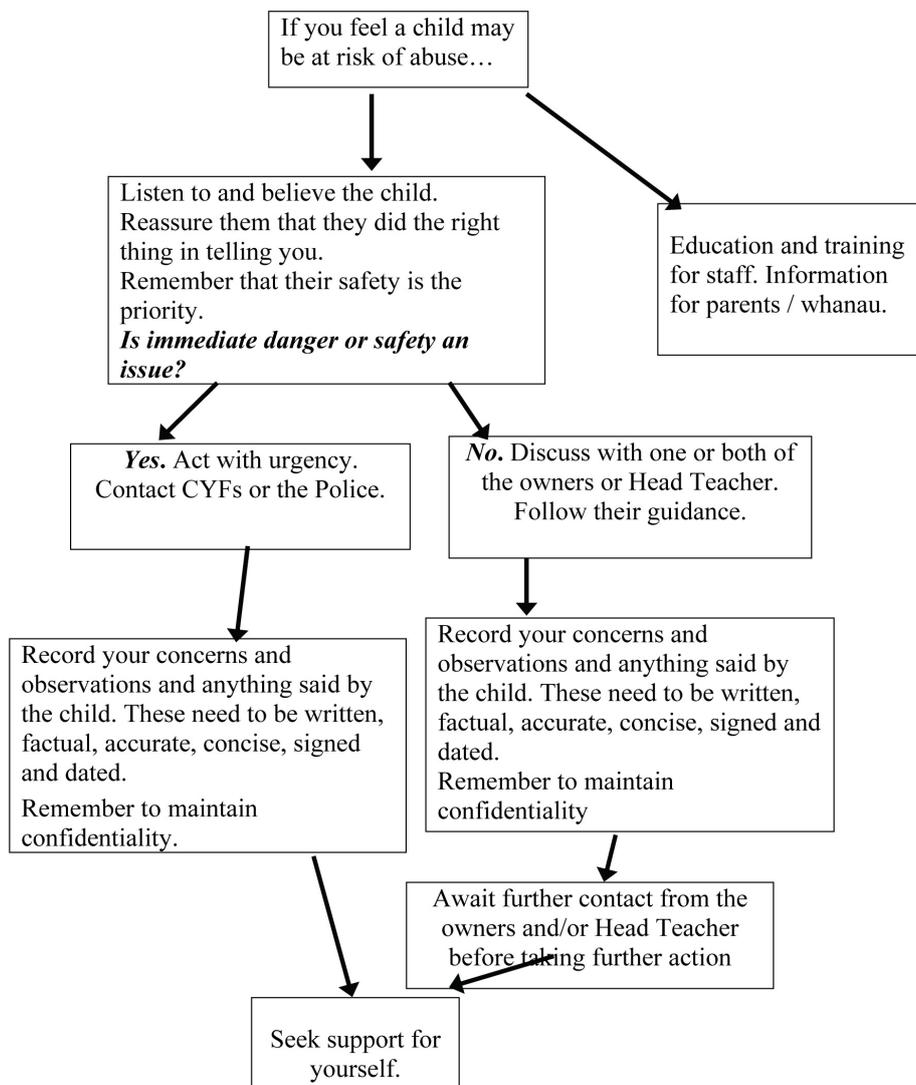
CASES OF SUSPECTED ABUSE BY A STAFF MEMBER

- When it is alleged that abuse has been perpetrated by a member of staff involved with the Childcare Centre, no attempt will be made to protect the staff member, or organisation, but the matter will be reported as soon as possible to the Management, and to the statutory authorities.
- While an investigation is being conducted, the staff member under suspicion will be suspended from all duties and responsibilities relating to the care of children in our Centre.
- While an investigation is in process, Management has the responsibility to ensure that the child concerned is not only safe, but is also given continued appropriate support.
- Similarly, the Centre will ensure that the alleged offender is given the support they need, during the time of inquiry, and beyond. This support may come from an outside organisation.
- The parent of the child (or children) affected will be advised as soon as possible.

CASES OF SUSPECTED ABUSE BY A FAMILY MEMBER OR SOMEONE CLOSE TO THE FAMILY

Where we think abuse may have been perpetrated by a family member or someone close to the family we will not initially inform the family of our decision to report or consult but will ensure they are informed by the appropriate person at the appropriate time.

FLOWCHART IF ABUSE IS SUSPECTED



GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH CHILDREN'S SEX PLAY

We believe that a certain amount of sex play among children is healthy and normal.

However, guidelines are needed to ensure children's physical and emotional wellbeing.

Lets Grow defines "normal" sex play as the following:

A two year old may:

- Show interest in the different positions adopted by boys and girls while urinating
- Masturbate
- Be interested in the differences between the sexes
- Learn to name body parts

- Not want anyone to touch his or her buttocks

A three year old may:

- Talk about the differences between the sexes especially the different positions for urinating
- Masturbate
- Attempt to urinate standing up (girls)

A four year old may:

- Be extremely conscious of the navel
- Under social stress, hold genitals and need to urinate
- Play the game of "show"
- Be very interested in other peoples' toilets
- Call others names related to toileting, and make jokes related to toileting
- Masturbate
- Demand privacy for self but be extremely interested in the toilet behaviour of others
- Be inquisitive about each other's bodies.

At Lets Grow, we will intervene under the following circumstances:

- If sex play is hidden from adults
- If there is any coercion
- If anything is inserted, or attempted to be inserted, into any opening e.g.: ears, eyes, vagina
- If sex play is excessively frequent

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Children keep their underpants on, unless there is a reason to take them off e.g.: after an "accident" or when wet from water play.

Children do not shut doors at Lets grow unless an adult has instructed them to do so.

Staff will ensure that they can see into all play areas, e.g.: huts, cubby-holes.

Parents will be notified of any inappropriate sex play involving their child.

Staff will pass on and discuss with each other, instances of frequent or inappropriate sex play.

Parents should advise staff of anything their child says which may point to inappropriate sex play having occurred.

Parents and visitors should advise a staff member if they see inappropriate sex play at Lets Grow.

We encourage positive play that involves children touching each other, such as listening to hearts or stomachs, or pointing and naming different parts of the body.

