



Early Start Project

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www.earlystart.co.nz

Child Protection Policy

Statement of Commitment

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

Policy Summary

The process for responding to a concern about a child is on **page 8** 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. Early Start commits to support the statutory agencies (Oranga Tamariki and the New Zealand Police (*the NZ Police*)) to investigate abuse or neglect and will report suspected cases and concerns to these agencies as per the process in this policy.

Our Designated Person(s) for Child Protection, the General Manager, will be responsible for the maintenance and 3-yearly 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. Early Start commits to ensure staff have access to the training they need.

A digital copy of this policy can be found on our website at www.earlystart.co.nz.

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 Early Start's commitment to protect children/tamariki from abuse and neglect and to recognise the important roles all of our staff have in protecting and advocating for children/tamariki.

This policy provides a broad framework and expectations to protect children/tamariki, including (but not limited to) staff behaviours in response to actual or suspected child abuse and neglect. It applies to all staff, including students, volunteers and part-time or temporary roles and contractors. It is intended to protect all children/tamariki that staff may encounter, including siblings, the children/tamariki of adults accessing services and any other children/tamariki encountered by staff as they provide their service.

In addition to guiding staff to make reports of suspected child abuse and neglect to the statutory agencies; i.e., Oranga Tamariki and the NZ Police; this policy will also help our staff to identify and respond to the needs of the many vulnerable children/tamariki whose wellbeing is of concern.

Early Start Services for the care and protection of children/tamariki are built on a bicultural partnership in accordance with Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

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/tamariki and families/whānau in a manner proportionate to the level of need and risk.

Contact details for agencies and services in our community are provided as an appendix to this policy. (*Appendix 1*) Where to find resources and guidelines which support this policy are provided as an appendix

to this policy. (*Appendix 2*)

To ensure that Early Start 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/tamariki from abuse and neglect. We will consult with experts with specialist knowledge and provide 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, students and volunteers.

Definitions

Child abuse refers to the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill treatment, abuse, neglect, or serious deprivation of any child/tamariki, young person/rangatahi (Section 14B Oranga Tamariki Act 1989).

- **Child:** any child or young person aged under the age of 18 years.
- **Child protection:** activities carried out to ensure that children/tamariki 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 the 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.
- **Oranga Tamariki:** the statutory agency responsible for investigating and responding to suspected abuse and neglect and for providing care and protection to children/tamariki found to be in need.
- **New Zealand Police:** the statutory agency responsible for responding to situations where a child is in immediate danger and for working with Oranga Tamariki 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 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/tamariki without someone safe looking after them).
 - Medical neglect (not taking care of health needs).
 - Educational neglect (allowing chronic truancy, failure to enroll in education or inattention to education needs)

Family Violence

Given that exposure to Family Violence is a form of emotional abuse, it is important to have an understanding of these terms.

Section 12 of The Family Violence Act (2018) say Family Relationships include:

- Spouses or partners – regardless of if they are married, in a civil union, living together or dating
- Any family or whānau relationship
- People who share a household
- Any people in a close personal relationship

A legal definition of Family Violence is provided in Section 9 of The Family Violent Act 2018 and should also be read in conjunction with sections 10 and 11.

<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2018/0046/latest/LMS112966.html>

Training supervision and support

Management has an organisational commitment to the Child Matters 5-Day Child Protection training for all service delivery staff.

All service delivery staff will complete ELearning through: www.safeguardingchildren.org.nz

All staff with service delivery responsibilities are required to undertake child abuse and neglect intervention training. The training will consist of:

Clinical Supervision and training, resources and/or advice will be available to ensure that all staff can carry out their roles in terms of this policy, particularly:

- Understanding child abuse and indicators of child abuse.
- How to reduce the risk of child abuse.
- Understanding and complying with legal obligations in regard to child abuse.
- Working with outside agencies on child abuse issues.

- The ability to assess, analyse and in partnership plan interventions to minimize risk
- Effectively communicating and working with child/parents/family/whānau.

This policy will be part of the initial staff orientation programme.

Advanced training for designated staff.

We are committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse through appropriate training.

Identifying child abuse and neglect

Information on identifying possible abuse or neglect is detailed in Oranga Tamariki: *‘Working Together to Support Tamariki, Rangatahi and Their Family/Whānau Interagency Guide 2021’*. This document should be read in conjunction with this policy.

In brief, staff need to be aware of the indicators of potential abuse and neglect. These indicators as noted in Working Together include:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1) Physical signs | 5) Behavioural concerns |
| 2) Developmental delays | 6) The child talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes called an allegation or disclosure) |
| 3) Physical neglect | 7) Neglectful supervision |
| 4) Medical neglect | 8) Abandonment |
| 9) Cumulative harm | |

Organisation wide 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 divorce, accidental injury, the arrival of a new sibling etc.
- We understand when we are concerned a child is showing signs of potential abuse or neglect we should talk to someone, either a colleague, manager/supervisor or the Designated Person for Child Protection – we shouldn’t act alone.
- In all cases where a member of staff has a concern about a child/tamariki/young person/rangatahi being or likely to be abused or neglected (refer to Definitions) by an adult or another child/tamariki or young person/rangatahi, they will report this to their manager/supervisor and make referrals/notify key staff to assist in the formulation of a plan to address the care and protection concerns.
- A notification to Oranga Tamariki may be made at any time following Early Start procedures. All notifications to OT are advised to the Early Start GM by the CM
- It is mandatory for all concerns to be reported/referred to the Clinical Manager within a time period which allows for effective consultation/advice to be given.

- 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 Family Violence is a form of child abuse.

Potential Indicators of Serious Harm/Neglect

We recognize the signs of potential abuse:

- 1) **Physical indicators** (e.g., bruises and welts, cuts and abrasions, burns, fractures and dislocations, multiple fractures at different stages of healing, unusual or excessive itching or pain in the genital or anal area, stained or bloody underclothes, STIs, UTIs, soils or wets bed with no medical cause, pale and emaciated, have malnutrition)
- 2) **Behaviour indicators** (e.g., giving vague or inconsistent explanations of injuries, flinches when touched unexpectedly, dresses inappropriately to hide injuries, regression, developmental delays, age-inappropriate sexual play or language, refuses to go home, depression/anxiety, overly compliant, compulsive behaviours, withdrawal or aggression)
- 3) **Caregiver indicators** (e.g., inconsistent or vague explanation of injuries, unconcerned about the wellbeing of the child/tamaiti, delays seeking medical attention, may take tamariki to multiple medical appointments without an obvious need, accuses the tamaiti of being sexually provocative, misuses alcohol or drugs, invades privacy, humiliates the child/tamaiti,, threatens the child/tamaiti, exposes the child/Tamaiti to arguing/violence in the home)

We recognize the signs of potential neglect:

- 1) **Physical indicators** (e.g., dresses inappropriately for the season, extremely dirty or unwashed, severe nappy rash, frequently left unsupervised, left in the care of inappropriate adults, not receiving adequate medical or dental care, malnourished)
- 2) **Behaviour indicators** (e.g., developmental delays, lack of attachment to parent/caregivers, indiscriminate attachments to other adults, poor school attendance, demanding, risk taking behaviours, poor social skills)
- 3) **Caregiver indicators** (e.g., puts own needs ahead of child/tamaiti, fails to provide basic needs, display little interest in the life of the child/tamaiti, abuses drugs/alcohol)

This organisation will act on the recommendations of statutory agencies, including Oranga Tamariki and the NZ Police. Prior to notification and following an agreed plan the family will be told the notification is being made and the reasons why we are worried about the child or children/tamariki's safety. From time to time and in exceptional circumstances and with supervisory guidance there may be a situation where a family would not be informed a notification is going to be made. In this instance it will be clearly stated on the OT Notification document that this is confidential.

When we respond to suspected child abuse or any concerning behaviour we document our observations,

impressions and communications in electronic casenotes if we are Family Support Workers/Whānau Āwhina. Clinical Supervisors keep paper records of plans agreed, and the care and protection data base is updated following supervision sessions.

Staff involved in cases of suspected child abuse are entitled to have support. We will maintain knowledge of such individuals, agencies and organisations in the community that provide support.

Confidentiality and information sharing Under Section 66C

We will seek advice from Oranga Tamariki and/or the NZ Police before identifying information about an allegation is shared with anyone, other than the Clinical Management Team or GM. Staff should be aware that:

- Under sections 15 and 16 of the Oranga Tamariki 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 Oranga Tamariki or the NZ 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 NZ Police or Oranga Tamariki under section 66A of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989.

Child safe practice guidelines

To avoid situations where staff may be alone with children/tamariki, all staff should examine the opportunities or possible situations where staff may be alone with children/tamariki. Wherever possible an open door policy for all spaces should be used (excludes toilets). Staff should be aware of where all children/tamariki are at all times.

If activities require one to one physical contact (i.e., classes, baby gym, music bugs etc.) parents and caregivers should be advised.

Where a child or young person requires assistance, e.g., if they are intellectually or physically disabled, if possible involve the parents/caregivers and outside agencies (in education such as the Ministry of Education's Special Education group) to assist. If this assistance is not available, ensure that the staff members are aware of the appropriate procedures when giving assistance.

Staff should avoid being alone when transporting a child or young person. In exceptional circumstances and with written parental consent a child may be transported without the parent. In exceptional circumstances and when only verbal consent has been given due to the circumstances the verbal consent must be documented according to accepted ES documentation guidelines.

Home visiting safety guidelines are to be observed (*as per the Early Start Employment Handbook, Section 8*).

Responding To Concerns, Allegations and Disclosure of Abuse

The following has been taken from the Information Sharing Guidance for Health Professionals document:

There are four important things to know about how the information sharing provisions in the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 and Family Violence Act 2018 work together:

- 1. Safety comes first. The sharing of personal information should be considered if there are concerns about someone's safety or if they or others are at risk of harm.*
- 2. Professionals can proactively share information, and while in most cases it's not compulsory, there will be some circumstances when you must share the information.*
- 3. You are protected when you share in good faith and in accordance with the legal requirements.*
- 4. The Oranga Tamariki Act and the Family Violence Act permit greater sharing than the Privacy Act and the Health Information Privacy Code in some circumstances, but other parts of the Privacy Act and the Health Information Privacy Code still apply.*

Recruitment and employment (safety checking)

Our recruitment policy reflects a commitment to child protection by including comprehensive screening procedures. Safety checks will be carried out, as required by the Children's Act 2014.

Disclosure of abuse or neglect is made



Listen to the child and use appropriate responses

See Appendix 2 of *Child Matters Guidelines for Responding When a Child Tells of His or Her Abuse*



If the child is visibly distressed

Provide appropriate reassurance and re-engage in appropriate activities under supervision until they are able to participate in ordinary activities



Is the child is in immediate danger?

Yes



No



Contact NZ Police immediately

Re-involve child in ordinary activities and explain what you are going to do next



Formally record disclosure *as soon as possible*

- Word for word, what the child said
- Date, time, location and names of relevant staff
- Factual concerns/observations that have led to the suspicion of abuse/neglect (physical, behavioural, developmental)
- Action taken by your organisation
- Any other relevant information



Decision-making

Discuss concerns with manager/supervisor or designated person for child protection



Notify authorities

Notify Oranga Tamariki promptly if there is a belief that a child has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected.

Phone: 0508 Family (0508 326 459)

Fax: 09 914 1211

contact@ot.govt.nz

When an allegation is made against a member of staff

All matters involving allegations against staff need to be escalated to the management team.

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



- *As per disclosure process, up to 'decision-making'*



- Management team to be notified.



- Management to consult with Oranga Tamariki or the NZ Police.
- Management to refer to the relevant employment agreement.



- Oranga Tamariki 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 the programme environment, subject to the employment contract.
- Management to maintain close liaison with Oranga Tamariki or the NZ 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.

Recording and notifying Oranga Tamariki of suspected child abuse or neglect:

Note: *Early Start documentation guidelines and expectations are to be followed.*

What process to follow	For example	Key considerations
Recording	Formally record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anything said by the child. • The date, time, location and the names of any staff that may be relevant. • The factual concerns or observations that have led to the suspicion of abuse or neglect (e.g., any physical, behavioural or developmental concerns). • The action taken by Early Start. • Any other information that may be relevant. 	Relevant information can inform any future actions.
Decision-making	Discuss any concern with the manager/supervisor or the designated person for child protection.	No decisions should be made in isolation.
Notifying authorities	Notify Oranga Tamariki promptly if there is a belief that a child has been, or is likely to be abused or neglected. A phone call to the National Contact Centre is the preferred initial contact with Oranga Tamariki (see below) as this enables both parties to discuss the nature of the concerns and appropriate response options. Phone: 0508 Family (0508 326 459) Fax: 09 914 1211 email: contact@ot.govt.nz	Oranga Tamariki will: Make the decision to inform the parents or caregivers, in consultation with our organisation. Advise what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the NZ Police.
Following the advice of Oranga Tamariki	Oranga Tamariki advice will include what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the NZ Police.	Oranga Tamariki is responsible for looking into the situation to find out what may be happening, whether Early Start needs to work with the family/whānau or put them in touch with people in their community who can help.
Storing relevant information	Securely store: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The record of the concern. • A record of any related discussions (including copies of correspondence, where appropriate). • A record of any advice received • The action Early Start took, including any rationale. • This concern with any earlier concerns, if the notification is based on an accumulation of concerns (rather than a specific incident). 	Records assist in identifying patterns.

APPENDIX 1: Contact details for community services and agencies

NZ Police ~ Christchurch Central - www.Police.govt.nz **Emergency:** 111
40 Lichfield St or PO Box 2109, Christchurch Central, Christchurch 8011 **Tel:** 03 363-7400

Oranga Tamariki - <https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/>
Free 0508-326-459 24 hour, 7 days a week **Email:** contact@ot.govt.nz

**WOMEN'S REFUGE for Christchurch
Battered Women's Trust (Affiliated)**
PO Box 36729, Merivale, Christchurch 8146
Crisis 0800 733-843 **Office** 03 332 4122 **Email:** office@bwt.org.nz

Te Whare Hauora (formerly Otautahi Women's Refuge) (Affiliated)
PO Box 7537, Sydenham, Christchurch 8240
24/7 Crisisline 0800 11 74 74 **Office Number:** 03 379 6910
Email: admin@tewharehauora.com

West Christchurch Women's Refuge (Affiliated)
PO Box 33292, Barrington, Christchurch 8244
Crisis 0800 733-843 **Email** info@westhouse.org.nz

Shakti Ethnic Women's Support Group Christchurch Inc. (Unaffiliated)
PO Box 24238, Eastgate, Christchurch 8642
Crisis 0800 742 584 **Office** 03 940 9416 **Email** scc@shakti.org.nz

AVIVA Christchurch Women's Refuge (Unaffiliated)
PO Box 24161, Christchurch 8642
Crisis 0800 28482 669 **Office** 03 378 3847 **Email** enquiries@aviva.org.nz

Te Puna Oranga
687 Worcester St, Linwood, Christchurch 8062
Crisis 0800 222 042 **Office** 03 381 8472 **Email** info@tepunaoranga.co.nz

APPENDIX 2: Resources and Guidelines

- Early Start Operations Manual
- Early Start Practice Manual
- <https://www.plunket.org.nz/>
- “How Can You Tell” booklet by Child Matters
- Care and Protection database
- Employee performance guidelines and KRAs
- Funders Contractual Expectations (MSD & Te Whatu Ora)
- Early Start “Response to Smacking” resource
- General Programme Resources: PES, IY, PPP
- Supervisory models and tools
- Orientation and ongoing training resources
- Early Start Family Harm resources
- Screens and monitoring tools
- Sharing information safely: Guidance on sharing personal information under the Family Violence Act 2018
- Working together to support tamariki, rangatahi and their family/whanau – Interagency Guide 2021
- Oranga Tamariki: <https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/>

APPENDIX 3: Relevant Legislation

- Children's Act 2014
<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0040/latest/DLM5501618.html>
- Oranga Tamariki Act, 1989
<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0024/latest/whole.html>
- Care of Children Act 2004
<http://legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2004/0090/latest/DLM317233.html>
- Family Violence Act 2018
<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2018/0046/latest/whole.html>
- Privacy Act 2020
<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2020/0031/latest/LMS23223.html>
- Victims' Rights Act 2002
<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2002/0039/latest/DLM157813.html>
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) 1990
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

The Basic Principles of Dealing With Disclosure

Respond to the Person (adult or child)	Believe what they tell you and what you see.
Record	Immediately all initial statements, observations and concerns to avoid misinterpretations or confusion at a later date.
Consult	Do not make decisions alone. Consult with someone experienced. If there is no short-term risk, take time to consult thoroughly in order to make a well-informed decision.
Record	Formally all your concerns from the initial disclosure and subsequent information you have gained.
Ensure the safety of the child	Always take action in the short term to ensure the immediate safety of the child. This will mean contacting OT or the NZ Police if you think there is an immediate risk of the child being abused again.
Report	Decide to act on your concerns. Don't leave it to someone else or hope it won't happen again. If you have told the person you believe is responsible for taking action and they do not act, take further action yourself.
Get support	Seek support for yourself. The tasks and situation will be stressful.

Guidelines for Responding When A Child Tells of His or Her Abuse

Listen: Do not put words into a child’s mouth. Allow them to tell only as much as they want.

Appropriate Responses:

- Thank you for telling me this. You have done the right thing.
- I know what to do and I am going to help you.
- When you say someone is doing bad things to you who are we talking about?
- Where does this person live?
- Who else knows about this?

Do Not:

- Question in a way that introduces words, phrases or concepts.
- Correct, confront, change, challenge or influence what they say.

Five Basic Rules:

1. Believe what they say
2. Say you’re glad they told you
3. Say you’re sorry it happened
4. Let them know it’s not their fault
5. Let them know you’ll help

Let them know too that they’re not the only one: This sort of thing happens to other children/tamariki too sometimes.

Do not over react: A child’s initial disclosure of sexual abuse is a critical moment. He or she will be monitoring every reaction.


Do not panic: If the child judges you unable to handle the situation, he or she may not disclose any more of the story.

Do not criticise: Don’t say: “You should have told me sooner.” Or “Why did you let him?”

Ensure the child’s immediate safety: Try not to alert the alleged abuser.

Seek advice and assistance: Ask about and find an up-to-date list of support services in your area.

Find support for yourself: Dealing with sexual abuse is hard, especially when it involves someone you care about. Discuss the matter with someone you feel comfortable with, someone you trust, someone who will respect the confidentiality of the situation.

Date adopted:	19 August 2015	Signature of General Manager: 
Review Period	3 yearly	
Reviewed	Oct 2024	
Next Review	Oct 2027	