**Canossa Kindergarten**

**Background**

Child abuse and neglect consist of an act of commission or omission that endangers or impairs a child's physical or emotional health and development.

Given the high number of children in early childhood education and care services, it is highly likely that staff will encounter a child they suspect has experienced harm or neglect. It is also possible that staff may encounter a child they suspect has been harmed by a person at the Service.

In Queensland, the Child Protection Act 1999 Section 13 E(1) requires early education and care professionals to report any reasonable suspicion that a child: (a) has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering, significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse; and (b)may not have a parent able and willing to protect the child from the harm.

**Policy statement**

The Service seeks to create a safe and supportive environment for the children who attend the Service and for their families. To this end, the Service ensures that processes are in place to identify harm or suspected harm to a child and that the Service’s response is lawful, professional and immediate.

**Strategies and practices**

* The Service is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for children where adults treat them with understanding, dignity and respect at all times, and listen to their concerns. The staff have signed a Statement of Commitment which is kept on file.
* The Service has developed and implemented its own Code of Conduct – Child Protection for interactions with children. The Code applies to staff, educators, students, volunteers and visitors to the Service, and each is given a copy of the Code.
* This Policy is explained to all staff, educators, students and volunteers before they commence at the Service. At that time, they are given the opportunity to ask any questions needed to clarify their understanding. They are then asked to sign the Child Protection Staff Acknowledgement Form.
* Child protection and child safety information is displayed on notice boards, and brochures are made available to parents, staff and other interested parties.
* The Service has clear procedures for recruiting, selecting and screening suitably qualified and experienced staff. No person commences at the Service without providing a current Blue Card.
* The Nominated Supervisor maintains a Staff Summary Sheet which clearly indicates the expiry dates of Blue Cards for all staff members.
* Staff are informed that it is an offence not to notify the Service of any change in the criminal history or police information they have previously provided to Blue Card Services when obtaining their card.
* The Nominated Supervisor interviews all students and volunteers before agreeing to their placement at the Service, and records their Blue Card details. Students and volunteers are informed that it is an offence not to notify the Service of any change in the criminal history or police information they have previously provided to the Blue Card Services when obtaining their card.
* The Service provides educators with ongoing professional development in child protection, and the topic is regularly discussed in team meetings. Staff have attended NAPCAN information sessions and keep up to date with any changes online. Bravehearts presents a show for the children every year in regards to personal safety and provide support for parents online. The staff are provided with information about Abuse – Types and Indicators. Training needs are documented in a Training and Study Record – Educator, and monitored.

* All children are observed on arrival and any injury recorded on the Incident on Intake form
* Any suspicion or allegation that physical and/or sexual abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for in the Service is to be immediately reported to the Nominated Supervisor. If the Nominated Supervisor is the subject of the suspicion or allegation, the report is to be made to the Approved Provider or directly to the Regulatory Authority. The Educator/ Nominated Supervisor/Approved Provider will report the incident to the Regulatory Authority. Reasonable grounds for suspecting harm include:
  + You witness the harm
  + A child tells you they have been harmed by someone at the Service
  + Someone else (e.g. another child, staff member, parent, outside person) tells you that a child has been harmed by a person at the Service.
* In the event of a child exhibiting sexualised behaviour beyond that considered by educators to be age-appropriate and not-unexpected, the matter is to be reported to the Nominated Supervisor who will, in turn, report the concern directly to the Regulatory Authority.
* The Service has developed Harm – Guidelines for Handling Disclosure to help staff, educators, students and volunteers, when faced with a disclosure from a child, to respond professionally and in the best interests of the child. Any disclosure of harm must be immediately reported to the Nominated Supervisor who will ensure that correct procedures are followed.
* Staff who suspect that a child may be experiencing harm or neglect when not at the Service are to follow the Harm – Guidelines for Handling Suspicion. These Guidelines include immediately informing the Nominated Supervisor, completing an Expression of Concern Form, and maintaining confidentiality as detailed in the Service’s Confidentiality Agreement.
* Educators intentionally teach children Protective Behaviours, and advise parents.
* The Service involves staff, educators and parents when compiling the Risk Management Plan for High Risk Activity or Special Event.
* Any breach of this Child Protection and Risk Management Policy – action or inaction – will be investigated according to the Breach Management Plan.
* The Service’s *Child Protection and Risk Management Strategy Policy* is reviewed at least annually. As part of the annual review, a Child Protection and Risk Management Strategy – Survey is distributed to staff, educators and parents for their contributions.

**Additional safe practices for babies**

* No additional practices required.

**Responsibilities of parents**

* To report any suspicion of harm to a child occurring at the Service to the Nominated Supervisor immediately.

**Procedure and forms**

* Abuse – Types and Indicators
* Breach Management Plan
* Child Protection and Risk Management Strategy – Survey
* Child Protection Staff Acknowledgement Form
* Code of Conduct – Child Protection
* Confidentiality Agreement
* Expression of Concern Form
* Harm – Guidelines for Handling Disclosure
* Harm – Guidelines for Handling Suspicion
* Incident on Intake
* Protective Behaviours
* Risk Management Plan for High Risk Activity or Special Event
* Staff Summary Sheet
* Statement of Commitment
* Training and Study Record – Educator

**Links to other policies**

* Educator Professionalism and Ethics Policy
* Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
* Relationships with Children Policy
* Staffing Policy
* Students, Volunteers and Visitors Policy

**Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011**

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| Regs | 84 | Awareness of child protection law |

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| QA | 2.2.3 | Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect. |
|  | 4.2.2 | Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships |
|  | 5.1.2 | The dignity and rights of every child are maintained. |
|  | 7.1.3 | Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service. |
|  | 7.2.3 | Educators, co-ordinators and staff members’ performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development. |

**Sources**

* ACECQA. (2017). *Reporting requirements about children.* <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/reporting-requirements-about-children> accessed November 2020
* Child Protection Act 1999 (current as at 1 January 2018). <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1999-010#sec.13E>

accessed November 2020

* Blue Card Services (Queensland Government).

<https://www.qld.gov.au/law/laws-regulated-industries-and-accountability/queensland-laws-and-regulations/regulated-industries-and-licensing/blue-card-services> accessed November 2020

* Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
* Guide to the National Quality Standard 2011
* NAPCAN. (n.d.). [*Listening to children.*](file:///C:\Dad\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\TKZCS6I1\Listening%20to%20children.%20http:\www.napcan.org.au\images\uploads\pdf\1flrxo8vzs.pdf) <http://napcan.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/listeningtochildren.pdf> accessed November 2020

**Further reading and useful websites**

* Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women
* <https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/department-child-safety-youth-women> accessed November 2020
* Office of the Australian Information Commissioner – <http://www.oaic.gov.au/> accessed November 2020
* Queensland Police – <http://www.police.qld.gov.au/> accessed November 2020

**Policy review**

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service’s commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

**Version Control**

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| **Version** | **Date Reviewed** | **Approved By** | **Comments/Amendments** | **Next Review Date** |
| 1 | 8 January 2018 | Dr Brenda Abbey (Author) | Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018.  Service to modify policies to its specific needs. |  |
| 2 | 4 November 2020 | Maryann Dziedzic | All staff contributed |  |