

Health & Safety - CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

POLICY – Educators and management have a sound knowledge of the factors which create a child safe environment including child protection issues and culturally safe practices, and the Co-operative has sound procedures and practices in place to keep all children safe from harm.

Rationale

The Co-operative aims to promote the safety and well-being of all children within the organisation, using the Child Safe Standards, the United Nations Rights of the Child charter, and the ECA Code of Ethics as a basis for the policy.

The Co-operative is committed to providing a safe environment for all children, including but not restricted to, children of Aboriginal descent, from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and those with a disability. The definition of a child safe environment within the context of this policy means provision and maintenance of an environment which is physically, spiritually, socially and emotionally safe for all children, and where their individual cultures and backgrounds are positively recognised and celebrated.

This commitment will be reflected in recruitment of and orientation procedures for all staff, as well as ongoing training and supervision, and procedures within all levels of the organisation, including the organisation's philosophy.

Practices which support the development and maintenance of a child safe environment include the empowerment of children of all ages through consultation, promotion of agency, and genuine acknowledgement and upholding of children's rights, including the right to be heard.

PROCEDURE

All staff, permanent or casual including subcontractors, members of the Committee of Management, as well as students and regular visitors will be required to provide evidence of being a person safe to work and interact with children, and make decisions regarding children's safety and wellbeing. This will include provision of a current Working with Children Check (WWCC), and where deemed necessary a Police Check. In addition the organisation will gather evidence from referees which will be conducted by the Director, Assistant Director or Committee of Management representative. A Child Safe Induction will occur for all staff, management, students, contractors and regular visitors prior to commencing with the organisation.

The organisation will demonstrate a commitment to providing a culturally safe environment for all children including those from indigenous, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds or with a disability. Culturally-sensitive practices will form part of the program and interactions with all children and families, and amongst all staff and management.

All staff will complete child protection and mandatory reporting training, and other relevant professional development around child safe environments, at least every 2 years. A database of evidence of conducting regular checks of currency of WWCC's will be maintained and kept at the centre office for all relevant staff, management, contractors, and regular visitors.

The organisation will appoint a Child Safety Champion whose role will include ensuring child safety considerations and practices are embedded into all aspects of the organisation's operations, and will be a point of contact and source of information for employees, children and families.

Source: Child Safe Standards, 2015
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECA Code of Ethics 2016
ACECQA - National Law and Regulations Nov 2011 reg 168 (2)
Developed November 2016

Appendix 1: Child Protection Reporting Procedure

Educators in early-childhood services are in a unique situation in relation to observing changes in children's behaviour. This procedure was developed to provide a framework for the protection of all children and to clarify procedures for staff.

1. A staff member forms a reasonable suspicion that a child may be in danger of abuse/neglect, based on, for example: observed changes in child's behaviour / instability; physical evidence of neglect or abuse; witnessing inadequate provision of care by parent/s or guardian; incidents of ridicule / verbally abusive interactions; inconsistent attendance; disclosure of information of concern by the child.
2. The staff member should bring concerns to the attention of the Director/Assistant Director, who may take immediate action (See 5 below). If the issue is unclear, the Director/Assistant Director may ask the staff member to record concerns; dates, anecdotes and observations (specify interactions objectively).
3. Confidentiality of the child and family concerned must be recognised and observed by all staff.
4. After further observation, the staff member should bring any evidence to the Director/Assistant Director. Discuss the urgency of the situation and/or the necessity for further observations and referrals to other support services. Ensure all discussions and observations are recorded in an objective manner and are kept with other highly confidential material.
5. Where the concerns are felt to be well founded, either when evidence is first noted (e.g. if child discloses abuse, or physical injury is observed), or after documentation of concerns over a period of time (e.g., child is consistently showing signs of neglect or behavioural disturbance), the Director/Assistant Director will contact Child First, or the Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Protection Service Unit at Bendigo, to discuss options.
6. After brief discussion with the DHS/ Child First adviser the Director/Assistant Director will decide whether to notify formally. With DHS, effective and sensitive investigation procedures and solutions are implemented. Details are shared.
7. The parent/s concerned may be informed by the Director/Assistant Director of the notification to DHS Regional Office. The District Officer will assess the situation, investigate the allegations and offer preventative measures to protect the 'at risk' child. Subsequent action, guidelines, advice and family support services are to be negotiated between the family and DHS.

The Director/Assistant Director, concerning the case management, may request information regarding: medical/educational or other appropriate reports, the family support services and welfare agencies involved, case management persons and emergency contact phone numbers. The Director/Assistant Director is to report back to the staff considering the special emotional needs of the child and ongoing services offered to this family.

Appendix 2: Visitors

POLICY

Family Day Care takes place in the Educator's home and from time to time, visitors to the home will be present. It is essential that records are kept of all visitors to the home in order to ensure that the child's safety is ensured and so that parents and the Coordination Unit are assured that only suitable persons come in contact with the children and that they are adequately supervised during the visit. No child is ever to be left in the care of a visitor, unless they are a registered Family Day Care Educator or a representative of the Coordination Unit. There are various categories of visitor – family and friends, colleagues including Coordination Unit staff, Authorised Officer from DET, temporary residents at the FDC home, and tradespeople.

PROCEDURE

1. It is the duty of the Educator to ensure that all visitors present during the hours of operation are aware of the presence of Family Day Care children and the requirements and responsibilities this entails for all adults to safeguard the children's wellbeing
2. All visitors over the age of 18 must sign in and out of the residence, on the provided sheet.
3. In the case of longer term visitors or temporary residents within the FDC Educator's home, the Educator must inform the Coordination Unit and families. If the visit is for more than 4 weeks, the scheme may require that the visitor obtain a police check and WWCC.
4. Visitors must **never be left** with FDC children unsupervised, and it is the Educator's responsibility to monitor the activities of the visitor at all times. Where the visitor is a friend of the Educator's children, the FDC children must not be left unsupervised with them e.g. playing in the Educator's child's bedroom or in the yard.
5. Other Educators may visit the residence to allow the children to play together – in this instance each Educator is responsible for the children in their care, but may supervise any of the children present for short periods e.g. to allow nappy changes, food preparation etc. Authorised persons from the Coordination Unit may also supervise the FDC children on visits or in the case of an emergency.

Source: Mt Alexander FDC - Handbook

Educator Agreement

National Law, Regulations and Standards Guide 165-6 169

Child Safe Standards 2015

Reviewed March 2006, October 2008, July 2009, July 2012, October 2016

Appendix 3 - Responsibility

POLICY – All stakeholders are aware of their responsibility to maintain a safe environment for children and adults within the service premises.

Rationale

To provide and maintain a FDC home environment that is safe and without risks to health for educators, children and families during the hours of operation of the service is the mutual responsibility of the Director/Assistant Director, educators and users of the service.

It is also the policy of the Victorian Family Day Care Association to protect the health and safety of all persons involved in Family Day Care, as far as practicable, whilst using the Scheme.

Safety is the concern of everyone

PROCEDURE

1. The Family Day Care Co-ordination Unit will:

- Take all reasonable steps to ensure that all equipment meets the relevant Australian Safety Standards.
- Safety check all Educator homes before registration by Mt Alexander Family Day Care. Formal safety checks will be carried out annually.
- Ensure the safety and cleanliness of any equipment provided to the Educator by the Co-ordination Unit. The on-going maintenance and cleanliness of equipment is the responsibility of the Educator using it.
- Promote workplace health & safety by education, information and instruction.
- Ensure that Educators maintain a high level of awareness of health and safety issues.
- Encourage each Educator to regard accident prevention as an individual responsibility.
- Foster a working environment which encourages Educators to report difficulties.
- Require that every accident is reported, and where appropriate investigated, and ensure any action necessary to reduce further safety and health risks.

2. Educators:

- Will take all the care of which they are capable for their own health and that of other people who may be affected by their conduct during the operation of Family Day Care.
- Must not wilfully or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of health and safety or welfare.
- Must not wilfully place at risk the health or safety of any person involved in FDC.
- Will be responsible for adopting safe work practices.
- Will diligently exercise their responsibility for safe working conditions and practices.
- Will be alert for safety and health risks in the FDC home and report these to Co-ordinator.
- Will observe all safety instructions, act safely – avoid unnecessary risk.
- Will maintain a clean, tidy and safe home during the operation of Family Day Care.

Source: Mt Alexander FDC handbook
National Law, Regulations and Standards (ACECQA 2011)
Kidsafe Guidelines
Child Safe Standards 2015

Reviewed September 2005, November 2008, July 2009, July 2012, November 2016

Appendix 4 - WORKING WITH CHILDREN and POLICE CHECKS

POLICY

It is a requirement of the National Quality Framework – Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations 2010 that all persons involved in child related activities will be required to hold a Working with Children Check (WWCC); employed staff must have an Employee status WWCC, and volunteers and students must have at least a Volunteer status WWCC.

In addition staff with financial responsibilities must pass a National Police Check at commencement of employment – this would apply to the Director, and Assistant Director.

PROCEDURE

1. At the commencement of employment all staff with direct supervisory duties must present a clear current Working with Children Check, Employee status. The exception to this is Registered Early Childhood Teachers who have a current VIT (Victorian Institute of Teaching) registration – this replaces the need for a WWCC.
2. A new employee must inform the Department of Justice within 21 days of change or addition of employment organisation. Details available at www.justice.vic.gov.au. A confirmatory document will be issued to the Centre by the Department of Justice.
3. The Director/Assistant Director will ensure that all relevant documents are sighted and recorded on the employee's record sheet at the commencement of employment. Updates will be recorded as received and the originals will be retained by the owner.
4. WWCC have duration of 5 years. It is the responsibility of the Educator to ensure that their WWCC is current and to advise the Department of Justice of any change of personal details.
5. If the centre receives a police check/WWCC containing disclosable outcomes, employment may be terminated immediately, or if it is a non-child related offence, the Committee would consider whether the disclosure was relevant to the employee's position.
6. Family members and partners of any FDC Educator living in the registered FDC premises who are over 18 years of age, will be required to have a Working with Children Check.
7. Regular volunteers and students on placement over the age of 18 years will be required to have a Volunteer (or Employee) Working with Children Check.

Sources ACECQA National Quality Framework – Law and Regulations 2010
Dept of Justice website – WWCC 2007

Reviewed: Dec 2006, May 2008, April 2009, July 2013, June 2016