



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The well-being and safety of children and young people is a paramount concern of Mi Casa ASC Programme.

Staff and management of Mi Casa ASC Programme are committed to responding to concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children and recognise that this may have consequences for the status and reputation of the organisation, management and staff. However, the interest and welfare of the child or young person will be the primary consideration when any action is taken about suspected abuse.

Mi Casa ASC Programme will not tolerate abusive behaviour of any kind and will promote a culture of child protection by making these policies visible to parents and the community - including in enrolment information and notice boards.

Mi Casa ASC Programme supports the roles of statutory agencies (the Police; Oranga Tamariki) and will consult with them when necessary.

The Vulnerable Children Act 2014 requires a rigorous process for screening staff who work with children. Mi Casa ASC Programme complies with this Act, in order safeguard the programme from inappropriate persons. This is further outlined in the Staffing Policy.

Purpose This policy guides the actions of the organisation whenever there is a concern about the abuse or mistreatment of children. This includes recording concerns, responding if a child discloses abuse, suspected abuse by staff and suspected abuse between children.

This policy applies to all staff, including part-time or temporary roles, volunteers and contractors.

1. 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 Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989).

Physical abuse - any acts that may result in physical harm of a child or young person.

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.

Emotional abuse - any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development.

Neglect - the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs, leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development.



Family violence may be witnessed/experienced by children and involve physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

2. Training

This organisation is committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse through appropriate training. Staff are expected to act at all times within their level of experience and training, and to consult with the programme Supervisor or Director/s about any concerns.

As part of their induction, new staff are explained:

- the programme policy and commitment to child protection
- procedures for supervising children and minimising the risk of an allegation of inappropriate behaviour
- what to do if abusive behaviour is observed
- the process for reporting any concerns
- how to respond to a disclosure of abuse

There will be annual in-house training about the child protection policy and appropriate external training will be accessed whenever possible – with priority given to permanent and senior staff members.

3. Identifying child abuse and neglect

All staff will be made aware of the signs of potential abuse or neglect (see below) and will always consider all available information before taking any action e.g. behavioural concerns may be the result of life events, such as divorce, accidental injury, the arrival of a new sibling etc.

Staff members are not expected to reach any conclusions about whether abuse or neglect is occurring, or what form it may be taking. They are expected to recognise and consult when something is wrong, if a pattern is noticed or several signs together cause concern.

Some signs of potential abuse / neglect

- Physical signs of abuse: unexplained injuries, burns, fractures, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases. Neglect: looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight
- Medical neglect (e.g. persistent nappy rash or skin disorders or other untreated medical issues).



- Developmental delays (e.g. small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills).
- Emotional abuse/neglect (e.g. sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness and evidence of self-harm).
- Behavioural concerns (e.g. age- inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place, eating disorders/substance abuse, disengagement/neediness, aggression).
- The child talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes called an allegation or disclosure).
- Neglectful supervision (e.g. out and about unsupervised, left alone, no safe home to return to).

4. Responding to child abuse

Under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families 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 Police and provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

This organisation will act on recommendations made by statutory agencies concerning the reporting of suspected abuse. Staff will only consult with or inform families about any suspected or actual abuse, after consulting with the appropriate statutory agencies.

When notifying the agency, a receipt or acknowledgement of the notification (written or electronic) will be requested. All information or notes concerning the notification will include date, time and name of the person receiving the notification.

Staff will respond to suspected child abuse or any concerning behaviour by writing down observations, impressions and communications in a confidential register. This will be kept separate from other programme records and enrolment information etc.

Information volunteered by a child should be fully and accurately recorded. Staff will not interview children about the suspected abuse.

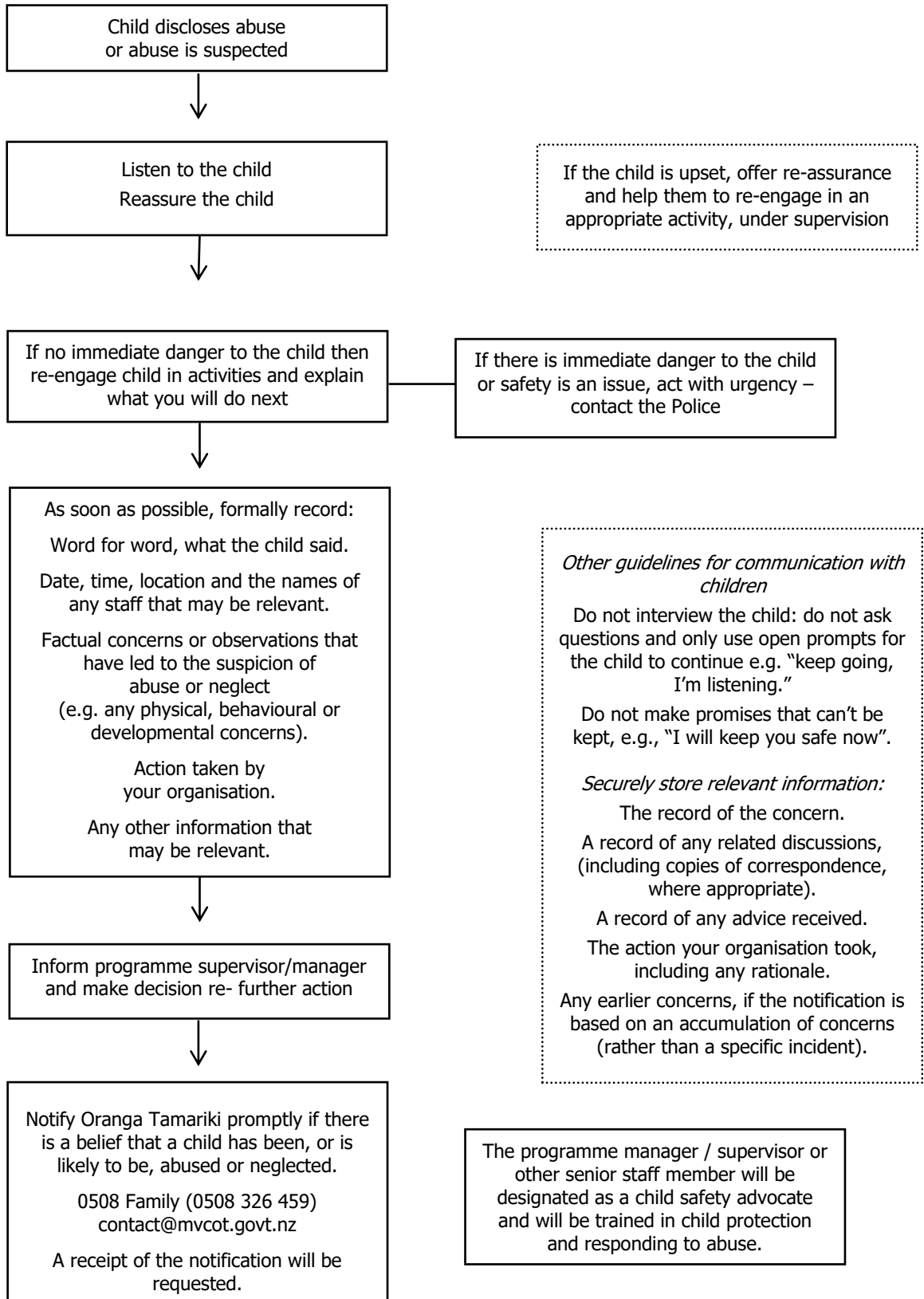
No staff member will act alone about suspected child abuse but will consult with the programme management. Where staff and programme management suspect child abuse has occurred, and a child is unsafe, immediate contact will be made with the Police or Oranga Tamariki.

Staff who are responding to cases of suspected child abuse are entitled to have support. The programme will maintain knowledge of such individuals or organisations that provide support and will assist staff to access these services as needed.

If a staff member has concerns for the safety of other people they come into contact with at the programme e.g. parents, siblings of children etc. they can raise these concerns with the programme supervisor and confer over an appropriate response, which may include contact with Oranga Tamariki. A confidential written record will be kept.



Responding to a disclosure/concern about abuse

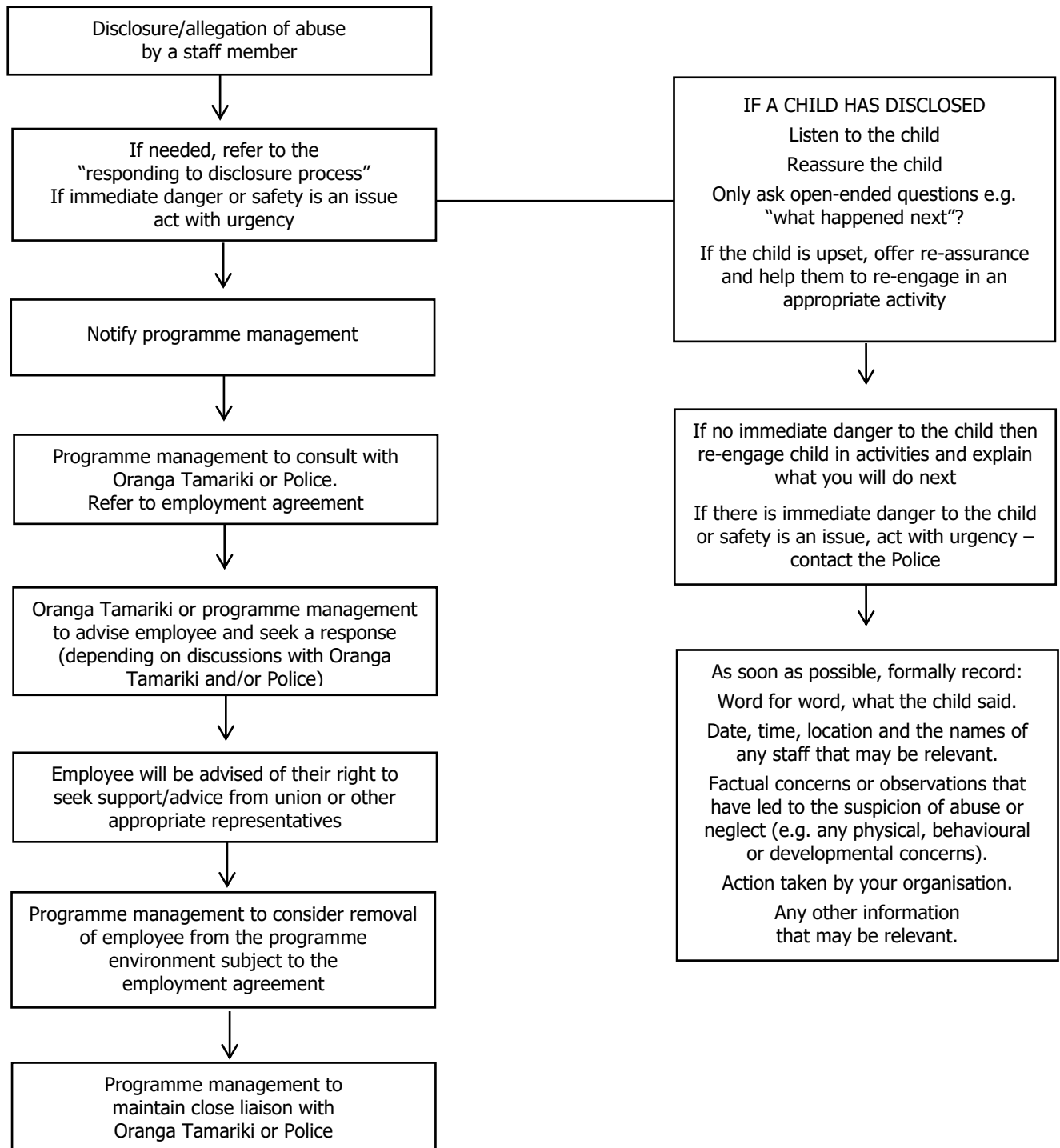




5. When an allegation of abuse is made against a staff member

Where it is suspected that child abuse has been carried out by a staff member (paid/ unpaid in any programme role), the matter will be reported promptly to programme management.

Any children involved will be protected from possible risk or trauma. Programme management may remove the staff member from the programme environment subject to the requirements of the applicable employment contract. All actions will be undertaken with appropriate care to maintain confidentiality.





This organisation acknowledges that the use of 'settlement agreements', could be contrary to the principles 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 concerns the safety or wellbeing of a child, use of such agreements will be avoided.

7. Peer abuse

This organisation will ensure that the safety of the child or young person is paramount and no form of physical, sexual or verbal harassment or violence from peers will be accepted or tolerated.

While the situation is being evaluated, the children/young people concerned will be kept separate.

In some cases, where the abuse has occurred at the programme, immediate suspension of a child may be appropriate, as outlined in the behaviour guidance policy.

This organisation will keep personal information as private as possible. Parents will also be asked to keep all information confidential to allow proper investigation and resolution.

All parents/caregivers will be kept informed about how the programme is responding to concerns, including meeting with staff to discuss these concerns. It is a policy of the programme to discourage interaction between the different parents involved and between parents and other children in the programme, while a concern is being investigated.

8. Child and staff safety – supervision and conduct guidelines

These specific guidelines are concerned with minimising the risk of allegations of inappropriate conduct. They should be read in conjunction with the Staff Code of Conduct, which outlines a wider range of staff behaviour guidelines.

All staff should be aware of situations where they could be alone with children. These situations will be avoided as much as possible.

An open door policy for all spaces should be used as much as possible (i.e. not for toilets). Staff will be aware of where all children are at all times and check to ensure what they are doing is appropriate.

Staff will watch for situations where children are out of sight together (play huts, storage areas, toilets, etc.) and intervene to reduce the risk of inappropriate behaviour.

Staff will avoid being alone when transporting a child or young person, unless an emergency requires it.

Except in an emergency (or as specified in the late collection policy), children and young people will not be taken from the programme by staff without parent consent.



Visitors to the centre will be monitored at all times by programme staff.

All volunteers and outside instructors will be monitored by the paid programme staff.

As outlined in the Code of Conduct: “Staff will provide physical comfort or reassurance when needed by children, but exercise caution and restraint when initiating physical contact or displaying signs of affection.” Staff will not allow children to climb on them or sit on their laps.

If activities require a higher degree of physical contact (i.e. classes in swimming, gymnastics, dance etc.) parents and caregivers will be informed.

Unless requested by children or parents there is usually no need to assist school aged children with toileting. If the situation arises, staff will ensure that another staff member knows who is assisting the child. Parents will be informed.

In some situations a child or young person may require more regular physical and or personal care assistance. Advice and assistance will be requested from parents/caregivers and specialist personnel. Programme management will negotiate with all involved regarding appropriate procedures for giving this assistance.