

# WORKING WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES



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Document Number:	6.1.23		
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Policy owner:	Executive Director Programs		
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Review Date:	January 2023		
Purpose:	To ensure that the wellbeing of children, young people and families underpins decision making and program planning, delivery and review.		
Relevant legislation and/or standards:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)</li> <li>• Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 (NT)</li> <li>• Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007 (NT)</li> <li>• Criminal Legislation Amendment (Child Sexual Abuse) Act 2018 No. 33 (NSW)</li> <li>• Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)</li> <li>• Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)</li> <li>• Children, Youth and Families Regulations 2007 (Vic)</li> <li>• Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 (Vic)</li> <li>• Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)</li> <li>• Working With Children Regulations 2016 (Vic)</li> <li>• Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)</li> <li>• The Charter of Human Rights &amp; Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)</li> <li>• Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)</li> <li>• Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)</li> <li>• Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</li> <li>• Reportable Conduct Scheme</li> <li>• Child Safe Standards.</li> </ul>		
Risk Awareness:	Operational, Reputational, Compliance, OHS, Strategic, Financial		
Related Documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice Framework</li> <li>• Duty of Care</li> <li>• Responding to suspected and disclosed sexual and other criminal abuse</li> <li>• Child Safety</li> <li>• Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Child Information Sharing – Vic</li> <li>• Child Information Sharing form</li> <li>• Child Information Sharing Authorisation form</li> </ul>		
Scope:	All staff		

Definitions:	NIL
Responsibilities:	Child Safety & Professional Standards Officer (General Manager Practice, Development and Innovation)
Policy:	<p>Jesuit Social Services believes the wellbeing of children, young people and families is of paramount importance. The legislation cited above provides the legislative basis for the provision of services to vulnerable children, young people and their families. Jesuit Social Services believes the best protection for children and young people is usually within the family, however, if additional support is needed to address issues we have a responsibility to involve the Child Protection or Child First services.</p> <p>This responsibility includes children (aged 0-16 years) who are utilising our services and children who accompany parents/carers who are utilising Jesuit Social Services' programs.</p> <p>Jesuit Social Services acknowledges its obligations under the legislation listed above, particularly in relation to children.</p> <p>Jesuit Social Services also acknowledges its legislative and community obligations including the <i>Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)</i> the <i>Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 (NT)</i> and <i>Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)</i> These Acts require all who work or volunteer in child-related areas to undergo a check, either a Working with Children Check (WWC) or Ochre Card check (if employed in the Northern Territory). Under this policy children will be supervised at all times while on Jesuit Social Services premises by workers and volunteers holding a Working With Children Check or Ochre Card. In these situations workers and volunteers must ensure the safety of the children under their supervision at all times.</p> <p>Jesuit Social Services also acknowledges its duty of care to all participants see <i>Practice Framework – Duty of Care</i> in Jesuit Social Services programs.</p> <p>Finally, under the <i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004</i>, Jesuit Social Services is responsible for the health and safety of all who enter its premises.</p>

## 1. PROCEDURE

Jesuit Social Services staff recognise the importance of the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in their programs. Staff are trained in the stages of child development and consider the developmental needs and milestone attainments of children and young people in their case planning. Staff development will maintain currency of skills in this area.

Jesuit Social Services also has an appointed Child Safety & Professional Standards Officer (General Manager Practice, Development and Innovation) whose role is to oversee the adherence to practice and policy standards and to act as a resource for staff, students and volunteers regarding the safety and wellbeing of children in our organisation.

Jesuit Social Services programs involved with vulnerable young people and their families/carers, including families with an unborn child, may consider that a family requires additional support and may consider reporting or referring a concern about the child or young person to:

- the Department of Health and Human Services **Child Protection** (Vic)
- the regional **Child FIRST** Service (Vic)
- Territory Families (Child Protection) ( NT). Where a child in the Northern Territory is suspected of being exposed to Family Violence or has disclosed exposure to Family Violence, a report must also be made to the police
- Child protection helpline (NSW)

## 1.1 IN VICTORIA

**Child FIRST** may be the best way of connecting children, young people and their families/carers to the services they need when there are concerns about any of the following:

- Significant parenting problems that may be affecting the child or young person's development
- Severe conflict
- Mental illness, substance abuse, disability or bereavement
- Social isolation
- Social or economic disadvantage that may adversely impact on a child or young person's care or development.

**Child FIRST** is also a useful point for secondary consultation.

A report should be made to **Child Protection** when concerns are more serious and include:

- Physical abuse or, non accidental or unexplained injury to a child or young person
- Disclosure of sexual abuse by a child or young person, or a combination of factors suggesting the likelihood of sexual abuse (eg. the child exhibiting concerning behaviours or where a known or suspected perpetrator has had unsupervised contact with the child or young person)
- Emotional abuse and ill treatment of a child or young person
- Persistent neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision where there is a likelihood of significant harm to the child
- Persistent family violence or parental/carer substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability – where there is a likelihood of significant harm to the child
- Where a child or young person's actions place them at risk of significant harm
- Where a child or young person appears to have been abandoned and there is no person adequately caring for the child or young person.

See Types and Indicators of Child Abuse at Appendix A.

Child Protection has an afterhours' service that is available outside of normal business hours.

### Procedure for contacting **Child FIRST** or **Child Protection**

1. In all instances where there are concerns about the welfare of a child or young person, the degree of risk should be discussed with line management. The decision about whether the risk is sufficient to make a referral to **Child FIRST** or a notification to **Child Protection** or police will be made in consultation with the relevant Manager.
2. Where possible concerns should be discussed with the parent/carer.
3. Jesuit Social Services staff must record concerns and discussions accurately and concisely in participant files.

**Child FIRST** and **Child Protection** will request information including:

- Name, address and age of the child/young person

- Reason for notification
- Assessment of immediate danger
- Current whereabouts of child/young person
- Schools/groups or other professionals involved with the child/young person/family/carer
- Known medical conditions
- Your relationship to the child
- Whether the family/carer is aware that a notification is being made and their possible response to Child Protection.

A notification can be made despite gaps in this information.

**Child FIRST** and **Child Protection** will carry out a risk assessment and provide advice/take action as necessary.

## 1.2 NORTHERN TERRITORY

### When you should report

In the Northern Territory, you must make a report if you reasonably believe a child has been harmed or exploited, or that a child is likely to be harmed or exploited or if there is suspected or disclosed exposure to Family Violence (a report must also be made to police at the same time as Child Protection).

This is a legal responsibility under the Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 and is called mandatory reporting.

Your report should include any relevant information about your concerns for the child's safety and wellbeing.

You don't need proof of harm or abuse to report your concerns - you just need a reasonable belief that a child has been harmed or is likely to be harmed.

If you are worried about neglect or harm to a child but are not sure if it's something you should report, you should talk about your concerns with professional staff at the Child Abuse Hotline on 1800 700 250.

You are safeguarded under the law from legal or professional liability if you make a report in good faith.

### How to report

In an emergency call 000 and ask for police.

If it's not an emergency, call police on 131 444 or contact your local police station.

You can also report suspected child abuse and neglect to either:

- the Child Abuse Hotline on 1800 700 250
- or Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

## 1.3 NEW SOUTH WALES

Families NSW may be the best way of connecting children, young people and their families/carers to the services they need when there are concerns about any of the following:

- helping parents to build their skills and confidence in parenting
- supporting parents and carers so they can respond to problems early
- building communities that support children and families
- improving the way agencies work together to make sure families get the services they need.

A report should be made to the NSW Governement Family and Community Services (FACS) Child Protection Helpline on 13 2111 when concerns are more serious and include:

- concerns about the safety,
- welfare; or
- wellbeing of a child or young person.

## **Procedure for reporting**

### **Step 1 - GET SUFFICIENT INFORMATION**

Get essential details:

- child or young person's details (name, address, DOB, details of siblings)
- incident details (date, type of risk, person's causing or contributing to harm)
- impact of the incident on the child or young person
- network of support around the young person.

### **Step 2 – DECIDE WHAT TO DO**

Use all of the information available to you to appraise the risk, needs and strengths of the family.

### **Step 3 – USE THE MANDATORY REPORTERS GUIDE (MRG)**

Mandatory reporters include social workers, caseworkers and youth worker.

- If the outcome of the MRG is 'Immediate Report to the Child Protection Helpline' or 'Report to the Child Protection Helpline', contact the Child Protection Helpline and have ready the essential details from Step 1 & the outcome of the MRG. You can also make an eReport for non-immediate matters <https://kidsreport.facs.nsw.gov.au>.
- If the outcome of the MRG is 'Contact your CWU' or 'Continue to monitor and support' – go to Step 4
- Even if a report is required, proceed to Step 4
- It is recommended that mandatory reporters complete the MRG on each occasion they have risk concerns, regardless of their level of experience or expertise. Each circumstance is different and every child and young person is unique.

### **Step 4 – FIND LOCAL HELP**

Your service -Consider what additional steps your service can take, including:

- whether your service is best placed to discuss your concerns with the family
- whether your service can offer to provide additional interventions or change your current interventions to further address risk factors.

Beyond your service - Explore appropriate support services for the child/young person and their family. The following options may assist you:

- Where you have access, call your CWU to discuss how you can appropriately assist the child within the capacity of your role and to get advice about referral pathways. Call Health CWU on 1300 480 420 or Call Education CWU on 9269 9400
- Contact your local Family Referral Service (FRS) if you would like help referring the family, child or young person to local support services such as housing or respite (<http://www.familyreferralservice.com.au>).
- Visit the Human Services Network (HSNet) website to self-access a broad range of services <https://www.hsnet.nsw.gov.au/>

- Contact NSW Family Services Inc. (FamS) to access support to non-government, not-for-profit organisation staff working with vulnerable children and families  
<https://www.fams.asn.au/>.
- Education staff working for non-government schools should call the Association of Independent Schools (Ph. 02 9299 2845) or the Catholic Education Commission NSW (Ph. 02 9287 1555). Note: Catholic system reporters should first seek assistance from their Diocesan office or local Catholic schools authority.

## 1.4 RISK MINIMISATION

### Minimising risk when Jesuit Social Services is supporting families with children/young people on site at Jesuit Social Services premises.

In general when working with children/young people and their families, Jesuit Social Services is responsible for ensuring that:

- Effective measures are implemented to eliminate or reduce the risk to children and young people's health and safety while with Jesuit Social Services.
- Referrals are made to children's support services and programs as appropriate.
- Services are conducted on an outreach basis where possible.
- When a parent or carer attends Jesuit Social Services offices, the worker will determine whether the matter can be dealt with solely through the provision of information and in this situation the child may attend the interview with the parent.
- Parents requiring more in-depth counselling/support will be asked, and if necessary assisted, to arrange childcare while this counselling occurs.
- Parents wishing to attend Jesuit Social Services programs on an ongoing basis will need to make their own childcare arrangements. Jesuit Social Services staff will provide parents with information from local councils on community childcare including occasional care, family day etc.
- If parents constitute the major component of a new Jesuit Social Services program, staff should consider parents' childcare needs and develop protocols with local community childcare services as part of the program development and implementation.
- Parents attending Jesuit Social Services Perry House accommodation facility may receive visits from their children if the visit is arranged in advance, a Jesuit Social Services worker is present at the site and the other residents have been informed of the visit.
- Parents attending Jesuit Social Services Rooming House accommodation should ensure contact visits with their children are made off site and with the prior knowledge of their case worker.

END OF DOCUMENT

## Document history table

Version	Reason for update	Date approved
5	Review due	Dec 2015
6	New legislation added and minor content amendments	August 2018
7	New legislation on Child Information Sharing	January 2019
8	Updated NT & NSW requirements	May 2019
9	Updated relevant legislation section	January 2020

## **Appendix A: Types and Indicators of Child Abuse**

There are various types of child abuse including physical harm, sexual harm, emotional harm & neglect.

**Please note:** The presence of an indicator **does not always** indicate that a child is being abused; and the absence of the indicators listed below does not indicate that the child is **not** being abused.

### **Physical Harm**

**Physical** indicators may include:

- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts, welts, fractured/broken bones
- Poisoning
- Internal injuries
- Shaking or strangulation injuries.

**Behavioural** indicators may include:

- Disclosure
- The child or young person expressing little emotion when hurt
- Unlikely explanation of and hiding of injuries
- The child or young person demonstrating a fear of parents/carers and being reluctant to go home
- The child or young person showing fear when hearing others cry or shout
- The child or young person being excessively friendly to strangers
- Passivity and quietness, nervousness, hyperactivity, aggression.

### **Sexual Abuse**

**Physical** indicators may include:

- Injury to the genital or rectal area, vaginal bleeding or discharge
- Discomfort in urinating or defecating
- Sexually Transmitted Infections or frequent Urinary tract infections
- Anxiety related illnesses.

**Behavioural** indicators may include:

- Disclosure
- Persistent and age inappropriate sexual activity or sexually explicit & age inappropriate drawings
- Regressive behaviour such as bedwetting and speech loss
- Self harming behaviour such as substance use, sex work and self mutilation
- Rocking sucking and biting
- Signs of depression
- Complaining of headaches or stomach pains or difficulties sleeping.

### **Neglect**

**Physical** indicators may include:

- Frequent hunger and/or malnutrition
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing
- Lack of supervision
- Medical needs not attended to
- Failure to thrive.

**Behavioural** indicators may include:

- Stealing food
- Staying at school outside school hours
- Tiredness, falling asleep
- Substance use
- Aggression
- Inability to relate well to peers
- Indiscriminate with affections.