



### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### Policy Summary

This policy outlines our commitment to Child Protection. It identifies how we will protect the safety and promote the wellbeing of the students of Allandale School. It provides the staff and Board of Trustees of Allandale School with a framework to manage actual and suspected child abuse and/or neglect. This policy is designed to be used in conjunction with Child Protection Policies of the organisations whose staff work with students of Allandale School. It includes our protocols when suspected or disclosed child abuse is reported to us.

Allandale School will ensure a safe children's workforce and shall comply with the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014 and the Children's Young Person's and their Families Act 1989.

#### Purpose

We have an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of children in our care and are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all children. The safety and wellbeing of the child is our top priority when investigating suspected or alleged abuse. This policy provides those working at Allandale School with the following:

- A framework to identify and manage actual and/or suspected abuse and neglect to ensure that every child who attends Allandale School is kept safe.
- Ensures professionals involved with Allandale School are able to identify and respond appropriately to actual and/or suspected abuse and neglect.
- Ensures that any services provided or actions taken in respect of actual and/or suspected abuse and neglect are guided by this Child Protection Policy.

#### Scope

This policy applies to all people at Allandale School who will work the children as part of the operation of the school. This also includes any person engaged as a contractor by Allandale School. It applies to all children who currently attend Allandale School and includes the siblings and relatives of those children.

#### Key Principles

This policy formalises a commitment by the Board of Trustees of Allandale School to protect the interests of children. Nine key principles have been developed to support this commitment. They are:

- The welfare and interest of the child or young person is paramount.
- The protection from abuse and neglect is a basic right and the staff and Board of Trustees of Allandale School will do their utmost to uphold this right for every child they engage with.
- Family/whānau have the right to be informed and participate in decision making about their children.
- Allandale School has a responsibility to protect the interest of a child by ensuring any ongoing concerns are appropriately escalated.
- Abuse and/or neglectful treatment of a child or young person is not tolerated and any identified indicators or instances of such treatment will be reported to Child youth and Family and/or Police.

- Allandale School acknowledges and takes into consideration of the cultural background of children and families/whānau engaged with the school. It will ensure that practice undertaken adheres to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.
- Effective information sharing and consistent communication is the foundation for sound decision making.
- All staff and volunteers working at Allandale School are aware of this policy and are supported to work in accordance of it.
- Allandale School will ensure that it applies with all relevant legislative requirements

## 2. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Child:** For the purposes of the policy a child is a person up to the age 14 years of age.

**Young Person:** For the purposes of the policy a young person is a person aged between 14 and 17 years of age.

**Child Protection:** Activities carried out to ensure that children and young people are safe in cases where there is suspected abuse and/or neglect or are at risk of abuse and/or neglect.

**Disclosure:** Information given to a person by a child, young person, parent or caregiver or a third party in relation to abuse and/or neglect.

**Designated Person for Child Protection:** The Principal or person designated responsible for providing advice and support to staff when they have a concern about an individual child or who want advice about the child protection policy.

**Child Youth and Family:** The agency responsible for investigating and responding suspected abuse and/or neglect and for providing care and protection for children found to be in need.

**New Zealand Police:** The agency responsible for responding to situations where a child is in immediate danger. They also work with Child Youth and Family in child protection work and investigating cases of abuse and/or neglect where an offence may have occurred.

**Physical Abuse:** A non-accidental act on a child or young person that results in physical harm. Physical abuse also involves the fabrication or inducing of illness.

**Sexual Abuse:** An act involving circumstances of indecency with, or sexual violation of, a child or young person, or using a child in the making of sexual imaging.

**Emotional Abuse:** The persistent emotional ill treatment of a child or young person. This can include a pattern of rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child. It may also include age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It also includes seeing or hearing the ill treatment of others.

**Neglect:** The persistent failure to meet the basic physical and/or psychological needs of a child or young person causing long term serious harm to their health or development. It may also include neglect of their basic or emotional needs.

**Cumulative Harm:** The effects of patterns of circumstances and events in a child's life, which diminish a child's sense of safety, stability and wellbeing. Cumulative harm is the existence of compounded experiences of multiple episodes of abuse or 'layers' of neglect. The unremitting daily impact on the child can be profound and exponential, covering multiple dimensions of the child's life.

## 3. RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- Vulnerable Children Act 2014  
(<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0040/latest/whole.html>)
- Crimes Act 1961

- Crimes Amendment Act 2011
- Children, Young Persons and their families Act 1989
- Privacy Act 1993
- Child, Youth and Family “ Working together to keep children and young people safe”  
(<http://www.cyf.govt.nz/working-with-others/working-together-to-keep-children-and-young-people-safe.html>)



#### **4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### **The Board of Trustees**

The Board of Trustees has governance responsibility for the Allandale School's child protection arrangements and will support capability building across all staff to strengthen safeguarding of children. The Board of Trustees has overarching responsibility for ensuring that all those employed by Allandale School adhere to the safety checking requirements outlined in the Vulnerable Children's Act, 2014.

##### **The Principal**

The Principal has overall responsibility for ensuring the policy is implemented and used effectively. The Principal has an ongoing responsibility to champion child protection within Allandale School, and should be available to staff for guidance, consultation and to respond to concerns. The Principal will be Allandale School's designated person for child protection.

The Principal will ensure all staff are made aware of and are supported to ensure they adhere to Allandale School's Child Protection Policy and Procedure. This will include providing appropriate training to ensure staff is aware of how to prevent, recognise and respond to suspected child abuse and/or neglect. The Principal will also ensure appropriate support is being provided to those who have identified and responded to suspected abuse and/or neglect. The Principal will also ensure Worker Safety Checks will be undertaken as required by the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.

The Principal has the responsibility for risk reporting processes and procedures that ensure the safety of children and their families within Allandale School. The Principal is responsible for advising Board of Trustees of any potential risk.

##### **Allandale School Staff**

All those working at Allandale School have a responsibility to adhere to this policy. A Memorandum of Understanding between local agencies providing external expertise will confirm primary case responsibility remains with Allandale School.

Staff members have a responsibility to ensure that their professional practice is consistent with the elements outlined in this policy. While external agencies will have their own Child Protection Policies, they will still have responsibilities to Allandale School and these dual responsibilities should be given effect wherever possible.

Those who understand their role and responsibilities under this policy will be a key asset in protecting the interests of children. That understanding will be achieved through consistent and agreed processes regarding child protection and regular training to raise staff awareness of child abuse and neglect.

##### **Statutory Responsibilities and Reporting**

Statutory responsibility to investigate allegations of child abuse or neglect rests with Child, Youth and Family and the Police. All those working at Allandale School have a professional obligation to report actual or suspected abuse so it is brought to the attention of the relevant statutory agencies and so the child can have the required support and protection. In cases where Child, Youth and Family or Police are involved or become involved Allandale School will cooperate fully with any investigations they initiate.

### **Capability Building and Professional Development**

Child safeguarding requires an on-going commitment to ensuring the staff of Allandale School have the skills, knowledge and understanding to work effectively together to understand and implement their responsibilities as they apply to protecting children.

The Board of Trustees will ensure that the Annual Plan includes a plan to build capability in staff regarding child protection, working with vulnerable children and the code of practice. It will also ensure any responses to suspected or actual abuse or neglect are appropriate, and in accordance with Allandale School procedures. This plan will include a development plan and review of policies to ensure learning and capability development. The Annual Plan will be reviewed each year.

## **5. RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGELCT**

This section provides information and guidance about how to respond when child protection concerns are disclosed, suspected or alleged. 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 shouldn't act alone. We should talk to someone, a colleague, manager/supervisor or the Designated Person for Child Protection.
- 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 to feel uncertain, however, the important thing is to be able to recognise when something is wrong, especially if we notice a pattern forming or several signs that make us concerned.
- Exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) is a form of child abuse. There is a high rate of co-occurrence between IPV and the physical abuse of children.

### **When matters involve a child attending Allandale School**

If child abuse and/or neglect is either suspected or disclosed about a child, sibling or member of whānau currently attending Allandale School the flowchart in Appendix 1 must be followed. The first priority must be ensuring the immediate safety of the child. If it is assessed that the child needs immediate action to secure their safety action should be taken without delay with both the Police and Child Youth and Family need to be notified immediately. Examples of such situations include:

- If a child or young person is in immediate or ongoing danger
- Homicide or serious harm
- Any assault on a child or young person
- If a child is left alone without reasonable provision of safe supervised care by a person aged 14 years or over.

Allandale School's Designated Person for Child Protection is available for consultation and advice to the professional who holds the concern about the child. Where the decision is to make a report of concern, the professional who holds the concern should contact Child, Youth and Family with the support of the

Designated Person for Child Protection. The recommendations provided by Child, Youth and Family and the Police must be followed.

Consultation with the Principal and Child, Youth and Family and/or the Police will be used to plan who will communicate with the child's parents and whānau about the concerns raised. Parents will be advised of the decision to make a Report of Concern where it is safe to do so.

Allandale School will not advise the parents that a Report of Concern is being made where doing so would put the child at undue risk, or there is a need for joint planning under the Child Protection Protocol between Child, Youth and Family and the Police. In these circumstances, the decision will be made jointly with Child Youth and Family and Police.

The matter will be considered at the next staff meeting to provide a professional review of the process.

### **When an Allegation Involves a Staff Member of Allandale School**

All matters involving allegations against staff need to be escalated to the Principal. If an allegation of child abuse or neglect is made or suspected and it concerns a staff member of the school, the Principal must contact the Board of Trustees immediately.

To ensure the child is kept safe, the Principal 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, including the Human Resources disciplinary procedures. The Principal will consult with Child, Youth and Family and/or the Police before taking any further actions.

The Principal must keep the Board of Trustees informed when a Report of Concern has been made to Child Youth and Family. The initial report must occur at the time of the concern being raised with follow-up reports at time of notification and as agreed by the Board of Trustees and the Principal on a case by case basis.

Allandale School commits 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 concerns the safety or wellbeing of a child, use of such agreements is contrary to a culture of child protection.

## **6. INFORMATION SHARING AND RECORDING**

### **When a Child Discloses**

If child discloses abuse and/or neglect, listen to the child, reassure them they have done the right thing and let them know they are not in any trouble. Do not interview the child and limit questions to open prompts such as "what happened next?" Record word for word what the child has said as soon as possible. For more information on dealing with disclosure see Appendix 2.

Allandale School recognises that all professionals must act within the legal requirements of the Privacy Act, Children's Young Persons and Their Families Act, Health Information Act and other statutes. There are provisions within each of these acts for sharing information needed to ensure the protection children and enable other people to carry out their legitimate functions. In general professionals will share information where it is deemed to enhance the safety and wellbeing of children.

Guidance on information sharing provided by the Ministry of Education applies in this policy. Any concerns about the safety and welfare of a child must be recorded according to record keeping systems in place for Allandale School. All concerns must be clearly recorded on the child's file. This should include:

- Observation and assessments
- Any conversations with the child

- Date and time

If a Report of Concern is made, this must also be kept on the child's file. Any concerns about the welfare of a child must be documented.

Additionally, a local record must be kept of all Reports of Concern made to Child, Youth and Family or the Police.

### **Child Safe Practice Guidelines**

To avoid situations where adults may be alone with children, all staff should examine the opportunities or possible situations where staff may be alone with children.

Wherever possible an open door policy for all spaces should be used (excludes toilets). Adults should be aware of where all children are at all times. Visitors should be monitored at all times by staff and volunteers and outside instructors should be monitored by staff. If activities require one to one physical contact (i.e., classes in swimming, gymnastics 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 (such as the Ministry of Education's Special Education group) to assist and develop an appropriate support plan.

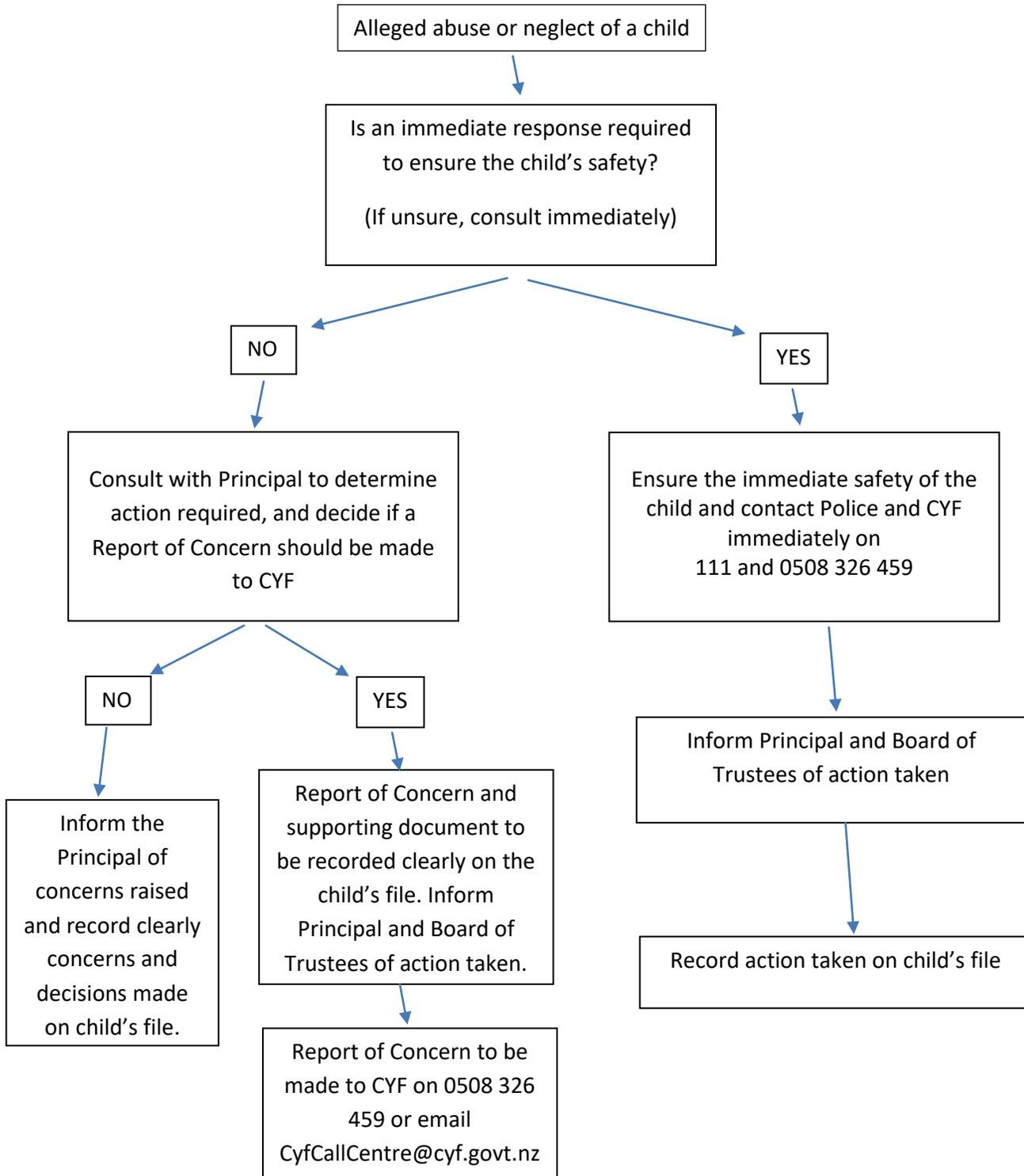
Staff should avoid being alone when transporting a child or young person, unless an emergency requires it. Children and young people are not to be transported by Allandale School without parental consent.

### **Training**

Allandale School is committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse through appropriate training. As part of their induction, new staff is made aware of the policy on child protection. Ongoing training will be provided as part of the Allandale School's Professional Development programme.

## 7. APPENDICES

### 1. Flow chart for responding to suspected abuse or neglect



## 2. What is child abuse and how to recognise it?

The following information is taken from 'Working Together Keeping Kids Safe':

*"Child abuse means the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person."*

This is the legal definition of child abuse, from the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 (section 2). While there are different definitions of abuse, the important thing is to think about the overall wellbeing or risk of harm to the child. Often children are neglected or harmed when parents don't have the skills and knowledge to care for their children safely, or where the family system is not working well. All types of abuse involve some form of emotional abuse. For example, a child who is physically assaulted will also suffer emotionally from the adult's behaviour and will probably also experience neglect.

### Clusters of signs

If you are concerned about a child, it's not so important to be able to categorise the type of abuse you think may be going on – it's normal to feel uncertain. However, if you notice a pattern forming or several signs that make you feel worried, this could be an indication that something is going wrong.

These clusters of signs may include:

- physical signs
- behavioural concerns
- developmental delays, changes or signs
- the child talking about things that may indicate abuse (sometimes called an allegation or disclosure)
- the family environment.

Every situation is different, so it's important to consider the whole child's life and environment. Sometimes these signs could be the result of life events, such as divorce, accidental injury, the arrival of a new sibling and so on. If ever you are concerned though, ask yourself the following questions:

*What is going on in the family or child's life that could be affecting them?*

*Is the child's behaviour a sign of abuse, or are there other things going on in the family?*

*How is the child's behaviour?*

Children can't easily describe what they are feeling, so their emotions often come out in their behaviour. If a child seems unusually difficult or withdrawn, aggressive or anxious, this may be a sign something is not right at home.

*How is the child's development?*

If a child is suffering from abuse or neglect, this may affect their development in a number of areas. This should be assessed by professionals whether it is abuse or not, so they can get the right help.

Has the child or family hinted at, or said that something is wrong?

The child may be looking for ways to tell you that something is wrong, so listen carefully and take what they say seriously.

*Are there signs of family violence?*

People experiencing family violence may seem fearful or nervous, lack in confidence, and feel sad or angry a lot. Children need to be protected from family violence, so need the help of adults around them.

*Do I sense the family is struggling, or the child is at risk in some way?*

You might have a feeling that things aren't right, but there are no actual signs of abuse, and you can't quite put your finger on the problem. If you're worried, talk to someone. Maybe talking with the family will put your mind at rest, or give you a steer on what's happening. Or you could talk with colleagues or others working with the family.

### **The Types of Child Maltreatment and Spotting the Signs**

This section gives you information about the different types of abuse, and the warning signs associated with them. It is an overview to help you understand what to look out for, but for more detailed descriptions check out the appendix section at the back of the book 'Working together to keep children and young people safe'.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the most common form of abuse, and although the effects may not be as obvious as physical abuse, they are just as serious, leading to damaged self-esteem and a lost opportunity to thrive in the world.

It can consist of:

*Physical neglect* – not providing the necessities of life like a warm place, enough food and clothing.

*Neglectful supervision* – leaving children home alone, or without someone safe looking after them during the day or night.

*Emotional neglect* – not giving children the comfort, attention and love they need through play, talk, and everyday affection.

*Medical neglect* – the failure to take care of their health needs.

*Educational neglect* – allowing chronic truancy, failure to enrol children in school, or inattention to special education needs.

Children who are being neglected may show a combination of behavioural and physical signs. Like every type of abuse, look for an overall pattern which tells you something's just not right for this child, and think about what you can do to help.

- Looking rough and uncared for – kids might be extremely dirty and not have the right clothes to keep warm and dry. Neglected children may also be underweight or small for their age because they're not getting enough, or the right sort of food.
- Persistent nappy rash or skin disorders – can be an indication that children aren't being well cared for.
- Out and about unsupervised – if the child is left alone, or doesn't have a safe home to go to they might spend lots of time at the neighbours', steal food, or regularly hang out at school or on the streets.
- Neglected and abused kids are at greater risk of drug and alcohol abuse, and can drift onto a dangerous pathway to offending.
- Falling behind in their school work and attendance – sometimes coupled with poor speech and social skills, or other developmental delays is a sign that kids are not getting the support and nurturing they need.
- Indiscriminate attachment to adults – strong attention and affection seeking, or a severe lack of attachment to their own parents can be a sign of neglect.

### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is a pattern of behaviour where the child is rejected and put down. They may be isolated, constantly degraded and criticised, or negatively compared to others. As emotional abuse is a component of all abuse and neglect, the signs are often encompassed in the other abuse types. You may often see the same indicators as you would for neglect, along with a few other signs that are particular to emotional abuse. The effects of emotional abuse may only become evident as the child gets older and begins to show difficult or disturbing behaviours.

A child who is emotionally abused may show the following signs in addition to what you'd expect to see from neglect:

- Sleep problems like bed-wetting or soiling – with no medical cause, nightmares and poor sleeping patterns.
- Frequent physical complaints – real or imagined such as headaches, nausea and vomiting, and abdominal pains. This might coincide with the child being very underweight or dehydrated.
- Signs of anxiety – including poor self-esteem, being unable to cope in social setting and sometimes obsessive behaviour. Children who are abused are very sad and alone, and might talk about hurting themselves or ending their lives.

### **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse is any behaviour which results in physical harm to a child. If you're worried about a child being physically abused, the signs to look out for are:

- Unexplained bruises, welts, cuts and abrasions – particularly in unusual places like the face, on their back or tummy, buttocks, or the backs of their legs. Also look out for the regularity of these injuries to see if there is a pattern forming.
- Unexplained fractures or dislocations – many kids are active resulting in bumps and breaks, but people need to be thinking about how and why these injuries happen. Especially worrying are fractures to the head or face, and hip or shoulder dislocations. Be very concerned if this is happening in young babies, who are less active and not moving around enough to accidentally hurt themselves.
- Burn marks – anywhere on the body are concerning, and if not easily explained need to be notified. Be mindful of burns in the shape of an object like a stove ring or iron, cigarette marks or rope burn.
- The child or their parent – can't recall how the injuries occurred – or their explanations change or don't make sense.

### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse is any act where an adult or a more powerful person uses a child or young person for a sexual purpose. This may be consensual or not, and can happen within or outside the family. Most sexual abuse is done by someone the child knows and trusts.

Sexual abuse may include physical sexual acts, or could be things like exposure to pornographic material and internet sites, or sexual conversations. It often begins with some form of grooming, which is when the person prepares the child for sexual contact by lowering their inhibitions and gaining their trust. Encourage children to talk to you or another trusted adult if they feel bad or uncomfortable about any relationships – whether a friendship, a relationship with an adult, or an online interaction. Encourage children to speak up. As adults, we consider sexual experiences to be very private and we don't usually talk about them openly. It's useful to think about how private and extremely difficult it must be for a child to talk about these – especially if they are feeling confused, or are being threatened by the adult.

Children may not know what to say and use different words to express what is going on. Let them know that if they don't like an adult or online friend, the right thing to do is talk to you... and remember you can call Child, Youth and Family with any concerns. One of the best things you can do is make it safe for children to speak up.

The following signs are an indication that a child may be being sexually abused, so talk to the child's doctor, Child, Youth and Family or the Police straight away if you notice:

- Physical indicators – like unusual or excessive itching, bruising, lacerations, redness, swelling or bleeding in the genital or anal area, and urinary tract infections. Also be concerned and ask questions if there is ever blood in a child's urine or faeces, it's painful for them to go to the toilet, or if a child or young girl is showing signs of being sexually active. When pregnancy or a sexually transmitted disease is identified, abuse must always be considered, especially in girls under 16 years.
- Age inappropriate sexual play or interest – and other unusual behaviour like sexually explicit drawings, descriptions and talk about sex can indicate this type of abuse.
- Fear of a certain person or place – children might be trying to express their fear without saying exactly what they are frightened of, so listen carefully, and take what they say seriously.
- Some children may purposefully try to make themselves unattractive, or try to feel clean through obsessive washing.

### **Family violence... It's never OK**

Everyone in a family should feel safe and nurtured. Any behaviour which makes someone feel controlled or fearful is never OK. Family violence includes yelling and hitting, as well as threatening to harm people, pets or property. Research shows that women and children are the most likely victims of family violence, although men can sometimes be victims too. Family violence covers the range of abuse types – it is physical, emotional and sexual - and victims suffer in all these ways. Children might fail to get the love and attention they need because parents are caught up in their own troubles, or they'll be frightened and insecure from the violence they're seeing. Children are always affected when there is violence in the family. Even if they are not being physically harmed themselves, they will be emotionally harmed. They may fall behind in school, bully others, or show a range of other behaviours and warning signs.

As well as children, you may be concerned about their parents or caregivers.

Some warning signs in adult victims:

- physical injuries including bruising in the chest and abdomen, injuries during pregnancy, multiple injuries, or patterns of a repeated injury
- depression, headaches, sleeping and eating disorders
- panic attacks, drug abuse and dependency on tranquilisers and alcohol
- the person gives explanations that do not fit the other signs, and is fearful, lacking in autonomy or self-worth.

Some warning signs in perpetrators include:

- isolates and controls their family, and may force them to move frequently
- threatens, criticises, intimidates, and uses aggressive and physical abuse towards their partner and children
- threatens to, or actually harms pets
- is sexually controlling and may force sex on their partner
- minimises and denies their own behaviour, or blames the victim for their own behaviour.

No one should ever feel scared or unsafe in their own family. Together, we can help stop family violence in New Zealand, and help children to be safe, strong and thrive in their own families and whānau.

### **High risk factors associated with child abuse and neglect**

Awareness of the factors that put a child at elevated risk of abuse or neglect can assist a children's worker in placing observations in context, and encourage due diligence when engaging in children's work.

The following indicators have been adapted from Child Abuse Indicators: Information for General Practitioners and Community Workers. Child and Adolescent Health Services, Taranaki Healthcare (1993, second edition)

#### ***Child characteristics associated with elevated risk of abuse or neglect***

- child has congenital abnormality, either mental or physical, or has characteristics of high intelligence or hyperactivity
- premature infant or ill new-born that is separated during neonatal period
- colicky or irritable child, child who is rigid or non-cuddly, or child perceived as particularly difficult
- child who is unwanted, or not of the gender expected or desired by the parents, or otherwise deviates from parent aspirations/expectations
- foster child, adopted child, or step child
- child resembling a disliked person in appearance, behaviour or temperament

#### ***Caregiver perceptions associated with elevated risk of abuse or neglect***

- "bad", "naughty", "manipulative" child, child that is "difficult" or unrewarding to care for
- child perceived as unloving or rejecting of parents
- a rival for attention or affection that parents themselves desire
- inappropriate attitudes to discipline, including "thrashings", any physical punishment of babies
- attitudes that validate terrorising, humiliating or oppressing the child

#### ***Family factors associated with elevated risk of abuse or neglect***

- family violence is present
- parent was abused or seriously neglected as a child
- parent has serious mental health problems
- parent has had frequent trouble with the law
- parent has an alcohol or drug problem
- parent has rigid or unrealistic expectations of child
- previous abuse towards this or another child
- parent has violent temper or outbursts towards things or people
- family socially isolated
- parents with low self-esteem
- parent is teenager
- family suffers from multiple crises
- parent administers harsh or unusual punishment

- custody/access issues
- transience – more than 2 moves in the last 12 months
- avoidance of contact with social services.

**The Child talking about things that may indicate abuse (allegations or disclosures)**

It is critical to respond appropriately to disclosures by children. The child must be supported, but any subsequent evidential interviews done by the Police and/or CYF can be compromised by inappropriate responses or questioning. The following guidelines should be followed:

***Overview***

- listen to the child
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing
- provide comfort to the child and let them know they are not in trouble
- do not interview the child, and limit questions to open prompts – “What happened next?”
- record, word for word, what the child said as soon as possible.

### **3. Dealing with disclosures**

It is critical to respond appropriately to disclosures by children. The child must be supported, but any subsequent evidential interviews done by the Police and/or CYF can be compromised by inappropriate responses or questioning. The following guidelines should be followed:

#### **Overview**

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- do not interview the child, and limit questions to open prompts – “What happened next?”
- record, word for word, what the child said as soon as possible.

#### **How to react**

- don't panic – the child will be observant of your reaction, and is in a position of vulnerability, if the child believes you cannot handle the situation, they may cease disclosure

#### **Listening**

- listen to the child, allowing the child to tell you only as much as they want to disclose
- ask as few questions as possible – do not interview the child, the disclosure is sufficient to engage social services and Police
- ensure that questions are not leading, or presuppose a response, or invite the child to reflect a statement back – e.g., never ask, “Did mummy do this to you?”, instead ask, “What happened?”

#### **Supporting the child**

- ensure the child is supported – tell them they have done the right thing by telling. Do not make promises you cannot keep – e.g., “this won't happen again”, “you'll be safe now”.
- respect the child – tell them what will happen next. Let them know what has to happen and what they will have choices about. Where possible, empower the child by giving them genuine choices.
- tell the child that you will be going to get help
- Recording – document, word for word, in quotation marks, what the child says. Clearly differentiate your speculations or suspicions from documentation of reported speech.

#### **Seek support**