

# **Edmund Rice Services**

## **PROCEDURAL MANUAL FOR MCPO ROLE RESPONSE TO CHILD PROTECTION NOTIFICATIONS**

**AUSTRALIA**

**8<sup>th</sup> December 2016**

## Part 1: Child Protection Strategic Response

It is recognized children, due to their developmental dependency, are a specific group within any society who have a higher risk of vulnerability to harm. As a consequence all children have the right to have their care, safety and protection needs met.

The Christian Brothers Oceania Province are committed to the care, safety and protection of all children with disabilities who are in receipt of services throughout the Province.

The Child Protection Strategy and Policies adopted by the Oceania Province and reflect a positively orientated response to meeting the seven care needs of all children in a developmentally appropriate manner. This 'Care Needs' approach is part of a *preventive child protection approach* towards protecting children from harm, through working to facilitate all children have access to a loving and caring environment, where their care needs are met appropriately. Despite this commitment to a preventive child protection approach the Oceania Province is aware some children will be exposed to harm or the risk of harm and as a consequence require a *responsive child protection approach*. This responsive approach, to be effective, requires:

- All staff and volunteers within Ministry services are trained in child protection knowledge and procedural requirements {Oceania Province Child Protection Reporting Protocol, 2013}
- There is available a first-point of contact child protection, **Child Protection Reporting Officer [RO]**, in each Ministry who staff and volunteers can go to report a child protection concern or allegation.
- There is available access to **professionally trained and experienced child protection staff** who have responsibility to receive a child protection notification from an RO or another person, case manages the child protection concern or allegation; particularly in relation to immediate child safety and protection decision-making.

There are two key professional child protection service principles, which underpin and are reflected in the Child Protection Policy and Reporting Protocol; Framework these principles are:

1. *Separation* of organizational management roles from a decision-making and case management response to a child protection concern or allegation.
2. *Utilization* of competency-based professional expertise as reflected in professional training [e.g. social work, psychology, counselling] and in professional child protection experience to manage the professional response to the concern or allegation.

### **3. Coverage of the Child Protection Response –Groups of Children & Types of Notifications**

#### *Groups of Children*

The child protection strategy of Oceania Province relates to two groups of children; these are:

1. **Children who are in direct receipt of services** – i.e. children who receive Ministry services
2. **Children who are not in receipt of services** - i.e. where staff or volunteers are aware of alleged child maltreatment concerns or allegations in relation to a child.

Under the Oceania Province Policy and Reporting Protocol, staff and volunteers are required to follow the requirements in relation to the two groups of children outlined.

#### *Notification Range*

The Child protection Strategic approach in the Oceania Province recognises and responds to two types of child maltreatment Notifications; these are:

- *Internal Notifications* – These Notifications are concerns or allegations, which relate to alleged events during the provision of the Ministry service. Such events encompasses alleged actions by a staff member, volunteer or a child towards a child [child-on-child]
- *External Notifications* – These Notification are concerns or allegations, which relate to allege events away from the service provision, such as within the family, community or school environment.

Both types of Notifications are required to be responded to under the Reporting Protocol.

### **4. Integrated Response to Child Protection Notification Concerns or Allegations.**

As part of the Christian Brothers Oceania Province child protection strategy, is required to work from a whole-organisation responsibility for child protection, which involves working with staff and volunteers as well as with State and community agencies. This integrated response presented diagrammatically in The integrated response reflects the key child protection principles of:

1. Staff and volunteer vigilance/attentiveness in relation to possible harm or risk of harm towards a child, [due to their higher risk vulnerability].
2. Staff and volunteer immediate responsiveness to inform the local Reporting Officer [RO] of possible child protection concerns relating to a specific child, following the Reporting Protocol.

3. Receipt of an internal or external notification by the MCPO to obtain the relevant information provided by the RO.
4. Management of the notification by the MCPO in relation to the professional tasks of:
  - Receipt of information
  - Request for further information
  - Contact with designated Ministry staff or other persons
  - Assessment of information
  - Response direction
  - Notification to the Regional Coordinator
  - Documentation

## **5. MCPO Manual Purpose**

The purpose of the Manual is to outline the procedural responsibilities of the MCPO role. The role of the MCPO is part of a Province-wide integrated strategic response. The role provides a professional and timely response to the care, safety and protection concerns or allegations relating to a child in receipt of services from a Ministry. This response is also available to children who are not receiving services and where there are concerns about their well-being which are known to staff or volunteers.

The Manual outlines in clear procedural steps the professional responsibilities of the MCPO. The Manual guides the MCPO to respond in an immediate professional manner to assess the concern or allegation brought to their attention and where the assessment identifies child protection concerns or allegations, facilitates in partnership with the Ministry staff and external agencies where required, both the child's immediate safety and protection and work towards supporting a child care environment, which responds to the child's care needs in a developmentally appropriate manner.

## **6. Responsibilities of the MCPO**

The MCPO role is one of the key professional roles in responding to an internal or external child protection Notification within the Australian Ministries. The MCPO role is supported by the Children's Services Standards Coordinator [CSSC]. The CSSC role is available on-call to the MCPO role, to work in partnership to manage Notifications and to make key professional decisions relating to the care, safety and protection of a child. The CSSC role is also available to refer to or discuss with the CSSC more complex notifications.

In line with international best practice in responding to a child protection notification and as reflected in the Procedural Manual, there is a commitment to ensuring the MCPO role is not professionally isolated, unsupported or unsupervised in managing Child Protection Notifications. Professional supervision is provided for the MCPO. Professional development is provided through support and training provided by the CSSC.

Standardised records relating to a Child Protection Notification are to be maintained and provided to the CSSC to be archived. Note it is a requirement when a child protection notification is completed the MCPO file is deleted after the file has been transferred to the CSSC and then lodged in the archives.

The MCPO within reasonable expectations must have the communications capacity to be contacted 24hrs/7 days a week. Current child protection Notification patterns indicate the vast majority of Notifications occur during working hours. However, a small group of Notifications occur during the evenings/early morning and weekends. These out-of-hours Notifications tend to relate to immediate safety/protection concern Notifications. It is expected, as per the Protocol, where a child protection situation is an emergency/crisis situation, the RO in partnership with the senior staff member or volunteer will facilitate immediate medical or police attention. The MCPO is subsequently contacted after the emergency or crisis conditions for the child are responded to.

The MCPO will as soon as feasible contact the International Child Protection Expert to enable both professionals to manage and make decisions relating to the Notification. The MCPO will remain the principle case manager with the support of the CSSC and the final authorised approval of the CSSC.

The MCPO is expected to:

- Be available to receive a Notification
- Ensure they obtain appropriate professional information relating to the Notification
- Check with the RO they have received the information about the Notification clearly.
- Find out more information to determine the status of the Notification
- Contact the CSSC where necessary or where the notification subsequently indicates it is a sexual, self-harming, drug trafficking or usage or significant violence concerns..
- Inform the child protection authorities [or work with the Ministry to inform the child protection authority], where approved of the Notification and work in partnership with the authority to facilitate the care, safety & protection of the child.
- Gain a picture of the existing care environment by follow up [through the staff/or by the MCPO] where known with family members and community agencies where available, to determine the safety of the family environment in relation to the return of the child.
- Where required facilitate the provision of follow-up services to establish or sustain the provision of a safe and protective environment for the child when this is required.
- Liaise with child protection, health, police, justice and social welfare services where appropriate to facilitate appropriate professional response to the service needs of the child and their family.
- Ensure compliance with the Oceania Province confidentiality and privacy requirements [based upon the Privacy Act [amended 2012] – Australia].

- Check with the RO or the ministry executive staff relating to the well-being of the volunteers and staff involved in a notification where the child protection concern/allegation may have led to a greater impact.
- Maintain Notification records as per the Procedural Manual requirements.
- Maintain Notification report records in a secure manner, which meets the Oceania Province child protection record keeping policy.

## **Part 2: The Procedural Manual**

### *Structure of the Manual*

The Manual is set out in six steps. Each step is presented in the order in which the service is provided by the MCPO. Within each STEP, there are outlined the TASKS a MCPO(s) is expected to undertake. At each STEP the MCPO can see what is expected of them.

The Manual is written in a clear and simple way to guide MCPO. The Manual allows MCPO to see the service provision requirements in relation to:

- What STEPS to take when the RO contacts the MCPO in relation to a child care, safety and protection concern or allegation.
- What TASKS have to be done within each Step.
- Check all STEPS and TASKS have been completed.
- Forms to be utilised

The Manual enables the MCPO role and other key stakeholders to see clearly:

- What stage a case is currently in.
- MCPO role and responsibilities within each stage.
- Integrated case response of all the people involved in the case.

**Step 1:** MCPO role receives a child protection Notification concern or allegation from an roleReporting Officer. [*Note a separate Notification is done for each child in a Notification where there are concerns about more than one child.*]

- **Task 1:** The MCPO encourages the RO to provide the information about the notification.
- **Task 2:** The MCPO focuses on obtaining the outlined information in the order indicated:
  - Age & gender of the child
  - Location of the child right now – e.g. are they at the Resource Centre
  - Location of the child in the immediate future – e.g. Are they attending a school/, living with relatives or friends?
  - Key concerns/allegation about the child – e.g. “the child has told a volunteer that she is being beaten by her father?”
  - Location of the alleged perpetrator if there is one identified

- Have other children or other vulnerable persons been named as also linked to the immediate child or child of concern.
- Have the police been contacted/medical services if an emergency situation
- **Task 3:** The MCPO role writes down the information received as rough notes immediately or as close as possible to the contact time with the RO. The information contains:
  - Time of receipt of notification [indicate time zone
  - Date of receipt of notification
  - Name of the RO
  - Location of the RO
  - Details about the case –
    - Age & gender of the child
    - Name
    - DOB
    - Current location
    - Alleged perpetrator
    - Incident[s] of concerns
- **Task 4:** the MCPO summarises back to the RO the information provided and obtains confirmation the information received is correct and fills in the form **[Form 1]**.

## Step 2: The MCPO Assesses the information

### Task 5: Assessment

- Identifies are there safety /child protection concerns/allegations?
- Identifies if further information is required through the RO
- Contacts the Ministry designated person [unless they are the subject of the concern/allegation] to discuss and obtain further information
- Determines if the concern/notification needs to proceed to the CSSC or to be discussed with the CSSC.

### Task 6: the Immediate/Longer Safety Needs of the Child

- The MCPO checks with the staff and the RO the immediate future safety situation of the child:
  - Who will the child be with?
  - Is the person[s] protective of the child?
  - Are there safety concerns?
  - Will an identified perpetrator have access to the child?
  - Will the protector[s] have the capacity to protect the child?
  - Will the protector[s] need help/support to protect the child?
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**Step 3: The MCPO follows up the safety strategy through the Ministry staff member**

- **Task 9:** The MCPO works with the Ministry staff member where appropriate to implement the safety strategy
  - Identify effective protector[s]
  - Identify support needs to protect the child
  - Monitor the safety of the child where possible.



**Information Form  
Record Table**

No	Status Internal External	Resource Centre	RO Reported to Date & time	RO Reported to MCPO Date/ Time	Child Details	Summary of Concerns	Outcome Response

## Example.

No	Date of Notification	Ministry	Reported by	Name of Child	Gender/ Age	Report	Outcome
152	7 <sup>th</sup> November 2016 4.05 pm est External	ERCNSW	Emily Banks Programme Officer		Girl 5 years	In a conversation with Emily the child indicated she was going away the next day and her mother told her not to tell anyone. When asked why she was not to tell anyone the child said she did not know. She then said she was going to Queensland. Then said the Gold Coast	This family is known to the Camps [no 146]. CSSC asked Bethany to speak to the mother at drop-off [no indication of prior safety issues]. Bethany indicated the mother had said they were going on a holiday, which had been pre-booked since November 2015. No safety concerns. Mother is taking the children out of school [because of cheaper rates].
153	30 <sup>th</sup> November 2016 5.25am wst  Internal	ERC Yeppoon	Jeremy Seng RO		Boy 7 yrs.	Notification occurred the last day of a four-day camp in which the volunteer indicated to the RO his worry about the child not eating during the camp. The volunteer indicated that the camp leaders had tried to interest the child in a range of food but the child was adamant he did not want to eat. The volunteer did indicate that the boy had eaten a muesli bar and had had a Nutella sandwich and a Vegemite sandwich. The volunteer also indicated the child had been drinking liquids – water, milk. Was indicated the child had ADHD and was on Ritalin.	Follow up in relation to the child with the RO and the volunteer did not indicate the child displayed any fear of adults and interacted with the other children. There was no evidence of physical harm or of neglect. Followed up with Libby. {EO} Referral indicated child can be verbally abuse, however on medication this is not displayed [camp did not see this behavior. Request Libby contact the referring school re safety of speaking to the parent/s. Contact made with the school – did not indicate known concerns relating to the child. CSSC indicated to Libby at the drop off the parent was informed of the child not eating. Contact made with the mother-who indicated her surprise the child did not eat on camp, as this did not occur at home. Mother would follow up and talk to the child. Child expressed he enjoyed the camp
154	30 <sup>th</sup>	ERC Yeppoon	Jeremy Seng		Boy	Reported the child	Contacted Libby who

	November 2016 5.30am wst		RO		9yrs	used repeated verbal threats of violence even when in ordinary situations. Child was reported as very quick in all situations to threaten by using expressions such as "I will punch your face in" "I will bash you if you do not do that" None of these actions were carried out despite the child's heightened emotional level when making the statements. The referral indicated the child is very shy and does not interact easily with other children or adults. The statements tended to one way – and where the child's reaction or another child or adult's behavior and not part of a verbal interaction between the child and another.	indicated the referral form did not indicate there were verbal aggression problems with the child. Requested Libby contact the school. Follow up with the school who indicated they did not have such problems with the child. School also indicated no safety concerns with the family. Follow up with the mother – surprised to hear about his behavior – thanked camps for letting her know – would talk to her son about the behavior.
155	30 <sup>th</sup> November 2016 5.35am wst	ERC Yeppoon	Jeremy Seng Ro		Boy 10 yrs.	The child formed a very strong attachment to one of the leaders and was very possessive of the leader [Tom Houghton] if the leader interacted with any other leader. The child was quick to cry and become angry and aggressive and demanding towards the other child/ran. This behavior was managed throughout the camp. On the 2 <sup>nd</sup> last day the child became angry with the leader showing attention towards other children. The child attacked the leader – pulled his hair and hit him on the face	Information about this child was difficult to obtain. The referral had come from an ex teacher at St Brendan's and the teacher had provided minimal information about the child. Contact was made with the teacher who could not give enough information about the 'safety' status of the family. On the camp the child had not indicated any safety issues relating to the family or any issues relating to fear or concern towards adults. CSSC assessed it was appropriate to talk to the family. Libby made contact with the mother. Mother indicated she was surprised about her child's behavior as he had not displayed such

							behavior at home or at school. Libby reported the mother did not indicate annoyance or anger about the report. The mother indicated she would talk to the child about his behaviour
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**Date completed**

**Signed**