

Edmund Rice Ministries

Framework for Development of a:

**Memorandum of Understanding between an Edmund Rice
Ministry and another Agency to Respond to Child Care,
Safety and Protection Concerns or Allegations**

Background

The framework outlines an agreement between an Edmund Rice service and another agency in relation to the provision of information to the Edmund Rice service at the time of the referral, as well as how the Edmund Rice service can work in partnership with the referring agency where a possible child protection concern or allegation has been raised.

Framework

This MOU between Edmund Rice [name of Edmund Rice service] and [name of referral service] relates to both [1] A referral request for placement of a child and to [2] A joint organisational service response when a child protection concern or allegation has been alerted.

The MOU outlines the referral process and the responsibilities of the referring agency and of ERCQ during the referral process. The MOU seeks to ensure a child is both appropriately placed on an ERCQ activity and receives appropriate child protection service during the provision of service.

Referral Process

The Referring Agency has a responsibility to:

- a) *To provide [name of Edmund Rice service] with information, where applicable, relating to:*
 - a. The child's assessed care needs
 - b. The child's past and current behaviour – with particular attention to evidence of harm towards self or others
 - c. The child's response to adult directives
 - d. The child's management of frustration
 - e. The child's care environment existing or pre existing safety/protection concerns
 - f. The child's behavioural or learning disorder [especially where there has been a clinical psychological or educational diagnosis]
 - g. The child's medication regime, where this has been prescribed.
 - h. Or any information considered relevant to the referral and assessment.

- b) *To provide [name of service], during the period of provision of service to the child:*
 - a) With the name of a staff member who is the agency contact for ERCQ during the duration of the service for the child
 - b) With a staff member who has sufficient background knowledge about the child and their family/care background
 - c) With a telephone number, which the contact person can be contacted at 24hr call during the duration of the service
 - d) With a contact person who provides to a [name of Edmund Rice service] staff member or Edmund Rice Children's Services Standards Coordinator [CSSC], information which facilitates a determination of risk and safety in relation to a child where a child protection notification has been received

- e) Where assessment of the referral indicates possible risks when the child is attending a Case Plan is developed which is agreed and signed by both agencies
- f) Works in partnership with [name of an Edmund Rice service] to provide where necessary follow-up services [either by the referring agency itself or another agency] to support the child and their family.

c. To where the referring agency assesses the notification provides reasonable grounds for concern in relation to a child's care, safety & protection:

- a) Can undertake, if the referring agency itself deems this appropriate, an agency-based Notification to the child protection authorities.

ERCQ has a responsibility to:

- a) Provide a service environment, which responds to the care, safety & protection needs of the child
- b) Ensure the service response is sensitive to the particular needs of each child
- c) Have in place professionally appropriate child care, safety & protection policies, protocols and procedures
- d) Implement child care, safety and protection Notification procedures when appropriately required under the professional directive of the CSSC.
- e) Contact the referring agency designated contact person to obtain further information about the child and family in relation to the Notification
- f) Determine with the referring agency the 'safety status' of the family/guardians in relation to a Notification
- g) Discuss with the referring agency whether the parents/guardians are informed of a non-statutory Notification [* where there is a State Notification the State determines whether parents/guardians can be informed]
- h) Inform the referring agency of the professional decision by the CSSC and the Executive Officer of [Name of Edmund Rice service] to make a Mandatory Notification to the Child Protection Department
- i) Request, where appropriate, the referring agency follow-up the child or family.
- j) Maintain and hold case records on the Notification.

Signed
 [Name of Edmund Rice Service]
 Date

Edmund Rice Services

Agency-Based After Hours Contact Policy for Edmund Rice Services

Background

The Agency-Based After-Hours Contact Policy is part of the Edmund Rice Services Child Protection Reporting Policy and Protocol [2013]. The Policy and Protocol reflect a commitment of Edmund Rice services to the care, safety and protection of all children who attend our Camps or other children's programmes.

The Child Protection Reporting Policy and Protocol has five key objectives in relation to children's wellbeing, these are:

- *Environment* – Compliance with the organisational Code of Conduct towards children to contribute to a positive care environment, which is responsive to the seven care needs of children in a developmentally appropriate and enriching manner.
- *Vigilance* – appropriate pre-emptive attention towards children's safety and protection.
- *Responsiveness* – to intervene if a child may be at-risk of harm or being harmed through either safety concerns or child protection concerns/allegations.
- *Reporting* – transfer of information relating to a concern/allegation to the appropriately designated person.
- *Professionalism* – expertise and independence of case management.

Child Protection Reporting Policy

The Child Protection Reporting Policy and Protocol is designed to ensure when information, which may suggest a child, is being harmed or is at-risk of harm, Edmund Rice services will professionally respond to the immediate and future safety needs of the child. Edmund Rice services professionally assesses whether the concerns/allegations meet statutory child protection thresholds and require State notification.

Edmund Rice services work in cooperation with statutory, referral agencies and community agencies to link children and families to support services.

Relationship with Referral Agencies to Edmund Rice services

The working professional partnership with referral agencies is a key component of the effective operationalization of the Child Protection Reporting Policy and Protocol. This partnership includes the provision of appropriate information at the point of referral to obtain a child, family and community context when a child protection concern or allegation arises. This partnership also includes the protocol to be able to have an in and out of hours contact access to the referral agency when further information may be required. The purpose of this contact is to determine at the completion of the service [especially after a camp] the safety status of the family/carer, to enable the child to be returned home.

For a small minority of the children who attend Edmund Rice services child protection concerns or allegations arise. In relation this group of children, for a small minority there may be a need to contact a referral agency staff member out-of-hours. This contact would only occur out-of hours if the child protection concern or allegation which arose was:

- Had not met the threshold for State reporting
and
- Close to return of the child to a parent/guardian and the safety of the family needs to be established.

Where we have the need to establish safety out of hours and where we cannot contact an agency personnel we may then refer the notification to the State child protection department.

Dr. Pauline Meemeduma

Children's Services Standards Coordinator. 7th December 2016

Where a referring agency contact person cannot be contacted and where the Notification indicates a safety concern relating to the child:

- a) The case is referred by [name of Edmund Rice service] under the professional directive of the CSSC, to the Department of Community, Child Safety & Disability Services.