

Interchange Shoalhaven Inc.

Consumer Services Policy: Mandatory Reporting

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this procedure is to ensure a safe, caring and nurturing environment for all children and young people in our care and to ensure that Interchange Shoalhaven complies with the requirements of the Children and Young Person (Care and Protection) Act, 1998.

2.0 RATIONALE

- 2.1 Child abuse is a widespread problem in the community and it occurs within all cultural, occupational and socio- economic groups in society. As a result any children's service may be caring for a number of abused or neglected children. The early detection of signs of abuse is assisted by keeping detailed records on each child. If a child is being abused then prompt intervention is essential. Confidentiality is essential to ensure a child is not placed at risk of further abuse or intimidated to change their story; or that an adult who is wrongly accused does not suffer damage to reputation and livelihood

3.0 OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 To ensure that staff minimise opportunities for abuse and provide children with maximum protection.
- 3.2 To ensure all staff are aware of indicators of child abuse and neglect, and of procedures for notification through orientation and ongoing training.

4.0 SCOPE

- 4.1 This policy applies to all staff who work in Interchange Shoalhaven programs that interact with children under 16 years.

5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 All staff are responsible to act as an advocate for all children and create a community that respects children as a priority.
- 5.2 All Interchange Shoalhaven staff are mandatory reporters they have the responsibility to make a report if they have any current concerns about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a child
- 5.3 The Coordinators are responsible for responding to all allegations of suspected risk of significant harm by notifying Community Services.
- 5.4 The Manager is responsible for ensuring all staff, including casuals, are provided with opportunities to develop skills in identifying and responding to children at risk of significant harm, and of procedures for notification through orientation and ongoing training.
- 5.5 The Manager is to notify the NSW Ombudsman if required and investigate any allegations against Interchange Shoalhaven employees.

6.0 DEFINITIONS

- 6.1 **PHYSICAL ABUSE**
is a non accidental injury inflicted on a child. This includes children being deliberately shaken, burnt, cut or hurt by excessive discipline. It can also include welts, burns, fractures, dislocations and attempted strangulation.

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- 6.2 **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**
occurs where a parent's emotional state or behaviour destroys a child's confidence in them. It can include excessive demands from the parent, continual rejection and little or no affection.
- 6.3 **SEXUAL ABUSE**
involves assaulting, mistreating or exposing a child to sexual activities with an adult, bigger or older person. The older person uses his or her power to gratify their own needs.
- 6.4 **NEGLECT** is the failure to provide the basic necessities of life, such as food, shelter, clothing, emotional security, medical care and supervision.

7.0 PROCEDURE

- 7.1 Each child is observed for signs of illness/injury that could affect participation in activities.
- 7.2 All staff that notice any signs of abuse are to complete an incident report and notify a Coordinator as soon as concerns about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a child arise.
- 7.3 Coordinators are to electronically create a child's file under P:\CONSUMER FILES\Mandatory Reporting. Scan and save incident report. Log report into Interchange Shoalhaven Mandatory Reporting log P:\CONSUMER FILES\Mandatory Reporting
- 7.4 Complete the online Mandatory Reporter Guide, print out, scan and save the final decision report into the child's electronic folder under P:\CONSUMER FILES\Mandatory Reporting
- 7.5 Coordinators are to follow specific instructions as outlined in the Mandatory Reporter Guide
- 7.6 Specific instructions will vary according to whether your concerns about the child or young person are reportable or not.
- 7.7 Irrespective of what Community Services does, it is important to maintain your professional relationship with the family as far as appropriate and possible.

8.0 REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES

- 8.1 **Immediate report to Community Services (CS): 13 3627 (TTY 9633 7698)**
You should make a report to the Child Protection Helpline as soon as possible, using the most direct means possible. In some instances, you will also need to arrange medical care and/or inform police.
- 8.2 **Report to Community Services (CS)**
You should make a report to the Child Protection Helpline within the next 24 hours, either by phone (13 3627; TTY 9633 7698)
Describe the specific circumstances that supported your YES or NO responses on the decision trees
The Child Protection Helpline may do the following:

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- 8.2.1 Screen out the report because they do not consider there to be a risk of significant harm;
- 8.2.2 Refer the report to Brighter Futures;
- 8.2.3 Assess the report but not open it for ongoing services;
- 8.2.4 Offer ongoing services/further assessment to the child/young person, other individual family members, or to the family together; or
- 8.2.5 Arrange protective placement for the child/young person.

9.0 REFERRALS

- 9.1 This decision point occurs when there is no significant harm or risk of significant harm, but the family may benefit from services and appear open to services. The Coordinator can respond in a number of ways depending on report and relationships with family members.
- 9.2 Consider referral to an appropriate case management service.
- 9.3 Irrespective of a report to CS, consider whether your concerns should be shared with other agencies connected with the child/young person, such as school, health, mental health, justice or housing. Certain agencies can share information regarding the safety, welfare and well-being of children and young people without their consent; however, where possible, client consent should be sought when information about a client is being disclosed to another agency. Refer to Interchange Shoalhaven Procedure: Information exchanged.
- 9.4 **Document and Continue Relationship (Also Document and Monitor)**
 - 9.4.1 When the decision point of 'Document and continue relationship' (or 'Document and monitor') is reached, Interchange Shoalhaven are not required to report. However, the Coordinator will document the decision and continue the professional relationship with family members, where appropriate.
- 9.5 **Document**
 - 9.5.1 Scan and save the final decision report into the child's electronic folder and update Mandatory Reporting log under P:\Coordinator files\consumers\Mandatory Reporting
- 9.6 **Continue Relationship (or Monitor)**
 - 9.6.1 All staff will continue an ongoing relationship with the child/young person AND/OR parent/carer, it is expected that such a relationship will continue regardless of the reporting decision. It is important to maintain a connection to the family so that if conditions worsen, you will be available to report to CS if need be. This relationship includes monitoring, creating or maintaining a safe space where the child/young person or parent/carer may further disclose concerns that already exist but which he/she has been reluctant to disclose, or to disclose new incidents. The relationship may also include supporting the child/young person or parent/carer who may be experiencing

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other difficulties that are not reportable as abuse or neglect.

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

The Children & Young Persons (Care & Protection) Act 1998

Mandatory Reporter Guide, NSW

Keep Them Safe: www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au

HSNet Service Link: www.hsnet.nsw.gov.au

Association of Children Welfare Agencies: www.acwa.asn.au