

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Part 1 - Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to prioritise the safety and well being of children through the facilitation of an appropriate, professional, consistent and coordinated crisis response to situations where staff believe children are at risk. It will ensure that action is taken by the Police and Child Protection Services to provide immediately safety for children at risk.

Part 2 - Scope

This policy applies to all volunteers, staff member and contractors employed by or representing Northside Community Service.

Part 3 - Policy

In cases where the worker/volunteer/representative of the organisation believes a child or children have been injured, harmed, neglected or abused or are at risk of injury, harm or abuse, an exception to client confidentiality will arise.

Workers will provide the direct supervisor, the Police and/or Care and Protection Services with both written and verbal notification of the concerns. Workers are to inform the client of this exception when discussing confidentiality during client intake.

When making a Child Protection notification all workers will refer to the *Keeping Children and Young People Safe Guide* which can be found online:

http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/5660/Keeping-Children-and-Young-People-Safe.pdf

Please note: In the ACT, Community Sector Staff are not legislated as mandatory reporters. It is a requirement of employment with Northside for workers to make a child protection report when a child is suspected of being at risk of harm or neglect.

Part 4 - Procedures

4.1 When to make a report

4.1.1 If a worker believes that a child/young person or children/young persons are at risk of harm, the worker is required to make a notification to Care and Protection Services and the Police.

4.1.2 If this is not possible and in the workers opinion, the child is likely to be further exposed to harm, then the worker is required to make a notification to either Police or Care and Protection Services.

4.1.2.1 If the situation is urgent the worker contact the Police (on the 000 emergency number) and quote the following from the *Child and Young People Act 1999*:

- Section 156: *"In need of care and protection"*;
- Section 222: *"Taking Emergency Action"*; and
- Section 223: *"Emergency Action by Police Officer"* which authorises police to act to remove the child.

The Police are to notify Care and Protection Services who then place the children/young people in an appropriate care facility such as foster care, should they deem this action necessary.

4.1.2.2. If the police choose not to act on the request or deem the situation not to be urgent, then the Worker will contact Care and Protection Services and make a notification. The Worker must provide CPS with as much detail as he or she can, relating to all parties involved including names, relationship and dates of birth, and the type of abuse, harm or neglect and details of any injuries the Worker has observed.

4.1.2.3. The Worker will need to record this information on the client's file.

4.1.2.4. In all matters relating to the removal of children the Worker involved may be required to make a

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report and appear in Court as a witness in any proceedings that result from the intervention. It is vital that notes in regard to what the Worker observed or incident witnessed need to be clear, detailed and objective.

- 4.1.2.5. Where a client or an informant reports child abuse or neglect the worker must record the information accurately and objectively. The Worker must suggest to the informant that they contact Care and Protection Services directly, and given the informant the telephone number for CPS. The Worker must tell the informant that the Worker intends to notify Care and Protection Services of the situation.
- 4.1.2.6. Workers will need to engage in close Supervision during the process of making a notification report to Care and Protection Services. The supervision recognises the vicarious trauma which can be experienced during this time and aims to assist workers to deal with their own feelings about the situation, and to assist them to keep on track with organizational policies and procedures relating to the situation. Northside also recognises the difficulties experienced by staff when trying to rebuild trust and rapport with clients after a child protection notification has been made. Supervision between staff and line managers should continue during this time and access to clinical external supervision will also be made available to any worker who chooses to access this practice.

4.2 Accessing external supports

- 4.2.1 Staff members are also encouraged to access the Northside Employee Assistance Program. Details are available from the Human Resources Team, or staff rooms at all Northside sites.

Part 5 - Definitions

Care and Protection Services: Care and Protection Services (CPS) investigates and intervenes in cases of child abuse and neglect. CPS is part of the Community Services Directorate (CSD) in the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support (OCYFS) branch. It is responsible for delivering the statutory care and protection response to children and young people. The *Child and Young Peoples Act 2009* also provides some useful definitions of what abuse and neglect means (see Section 151 of the Act):

Abuse: in relation to a child or young person means:

- Physical abuse; or
- Sexual abuse; or
- Emotional abuse (including psychological abuse) if the child or young person has suffered, is suffering or is likely to suffer in a way that has caused, is causing or is likely to cause significant harm to his or her wellbeing or development; or
- Emotional abuse (including psychological abuse) if-
 - I. The child or young person has been, is being, or is likely to be exposed to conduct that is domestic violence under the *Domestic Violence and Protection Orders Act 2001*; and
 - II. Exposure has caused, is causing or is likely to cause significant harm to the child's or young person's wellbeing or development.

Neglect: ...of a child or a young person, means a failure to provide the child or young person with a necessity of life that has caused, is causing or is likely to cause the child or young person significant harm to his or her wellbeing or development. Examples of necessities of life include food, shelter, clothing and medical care.

Worker: Includes paid and unpaid staff, volunteers and delegated representatives of Northside Community Service.

Part 6 – Related Documents

Code of Conduct
 Client Privacy Policy

located at: <J:\Shared\Policy & Procedure Manual>

Contact Numbers for Care and Protection

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Centralised Intake Service

Ph: 02 6207 6956
 Fax: 6205 0648

Mandated Reporters

Ph: 1300 556 728
 Fax: 02 6205 0641

General Public After Hours

Ph: 1300 556 729
 Fax: 02 6205 0648

Crisis Service

1300 556 729

Response and Intervention Team

Ph: 02 6207 1466 or 02 6207 5169
 Fax: 02 6205 5684 or 02 6207 5394

Care Orders Team

Ph: 02 6207 1069
 Fax: 02 6207 1020

Section 158 of the *Child and Young People Act 1999* ('the Act') provides a mechanism for Northside Community Service to report concerns regarding the welfare of children and young people to Child Protection Services.

The Act provides community services workers in the ACT with protection from resulting civil or criminal liability, and protection from disclosure of their identity. The Act also stipulates that reporting concerns to CPS is not a breach of confidence, professional etiquette, ethics or a rule of professional conduct under Section 163. Section 404 of the Act allows client information to be exchanged on a need to know basis where this is clearly linked to the care and protection of children. Additionally, Sections 180 and 405 of the Act relate specifically to Family Group Conferences and prohibits the release of:

- Information that identifies or tends to identify anything said or done at a family group conference; or
- Information or a report provided to a Family Group Conference.

Child and Young People Act 1999 (updated 2009)

Office for Children, Youth and Family Support (2005). *Keeping children and young people safe – Reporting child abuse: a shared community responsibility*. ACT Government Publishing Services: Canberra, ACT.

Barnardos Australia (n.d.). *Allegations Against ACT Carers, Employees or Volunteers*. Barnardos Australia: Canberra, ACT.

Part 7 – Policy Status and Details

Document Reference:	
Status:	Final
Approval Authority:	Simon Rosenberg – Chief Executive Officer
Signature of Approval Authority:	
Approval Date:	October 2013
Effective Date:	October 2013
Review Date:	October 2016

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Expiry Date:	
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Part 8 – Revision History

Revision Date	Version No.	Change	Reference Sections
October 2014	2	NCS > Northside Update to <i>Keeping Children and Young People Safe</i> document hyperlink	Entire document Section 4