

Child Protection



Policy

Protection of children and members of staff is a priority for Janelle Street Centre. The Centre therefore directs that if a staff member suspects that a child is being abused or harmed, the guidelines set out by the Ombudsman and DECS are to be followed. Under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection Act 1998)*, the grounds in NSW for risk or harm are:

- Basic physical or psychological needs not met.
- Necessary medical care not being received
- Children have been, or are at risk of, physical, sexual, or psychological abuse or neglect.
- Children are exposed to domestic violence or serious psychological harm.

A report to DET is mandatory if staff feel they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk or harm. If the incident involves an employee, the Director or another employee must notify the Ombudsman within 30 days.

Background

Child Protection at Janelle Street Centre is based on NSW legislation entitled:

Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 No 157

Section 8 states that the objects of this Act are to provide:

- (a) that children and young persons receive such care and protection as is necessary for their safety, welfare and well-being, having regard to the capacity of their parents or other persons responsible for them, and*
- (b) that all institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care and protection of children and young persons provide an environment for them that is free of violence and exploitation and provide services that foster their health, developmental needs, spirituality, self-respect and dignity, and*
- (c) that appropriate assistance is rendered to parents and other persons responsible for children and young persons in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities in order to promote a safe and nurturing environment.*

One of the most important concerns of any community is the health, safety and well-being of its children and young people. Whilst parents and carers are responsible for the safety and welfare of children in their care, protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect is the responsibility of the whole community. Child abuse and neglect can happen to any child or young person in any family and can have lasting, damaging effects. There are many reasons why children are at risk of abuse and neglect.

For example:

- Their families do not have adequate support from relatives or the community, their parents are experiencing a lot of stress such as unemployment, illness, isolation or loneliness;
- Their parents may not have experienced good parenting themselves;
- Their parents may be alcohol or drug dependent or have mental health issues or there may be domestic violence in the household.

Reporting concerns about a child or young person's safety or well-being is an important step in preventing or stopping the abuse and protecting children from further harm. It also gives DECS the chance to help families in situations where a child or young person may be at risk.

Practices

Staff must make a mandatory report on the website <http://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au> if they feel they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk or harm.

If the incident is related to the employee, the employer must notify the Ombudsman within 30 days. Individuals can be fined for failing to meet the mandatory reporting responsibilities.

All suspected cases of abuse will be formally documented with detailed information.

If staff are suspected of abuse they will be suspended with full pay until a determination is made by DET.

Staff are to access the NQAITs portal if there is a sexual or physical report incident by staff or children and follow the instructions for reporting.

Staff are to inform Responsible Person when making a report.

Children or staff suspected of being involved in abuse or harm are not to be judged but dealt with in a circumspect manner.

All relevant conversation must be documented in the Room Book and only applicable staff are to view it.

The Helpline will need the following information when a report is being made:

- Details of the child and family
 - Age and date of birth of other children involved.
 - Name/s of other child/children involved.
 - Whether it is a domestic violence situation.
 - Where the child/children were at the time.
 - Child's address.
 - Name of Centre.
 - Address of parents if different from child's.
 - Names of parents/de facto/step parents.
 - Whether the mother is in a refuge.
 - Length of parents' relationship or how long they have been separated.
- Caller's details:
 - Name and position on staff.
 - Address.
 - Telephone number.
 - Email
- Reason for call
- Questions you may be asked by the Helpline:
 - What has happened that prompted this call?
 - Do you have a concern for the immediate safety of the child?
 - If yes, why? Case worker will consult team leader at this point.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBER: Child Protection Hotline 132 111 (24 hours/7 days).

All staff are mandatory reporters. Failure to comply may result in termination of employment and or disciplinary action.

Sources

- <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au> (accessed June 17, 2024)
- <https://facs.nsw.gov.au> (accessed June 17, 2024)

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