**Keep them Safe - Child Protection Policy**

**Aim:** To identify and respond to children and young people at risk of significant harm. All staff will hold a current working with children check approval.

**Explanation:**

Keep them safe legislation reinforces the principle that care and protection of children and young people is a shared responsibility. This responsibility rests firmly with parents, families and communities.

The goal of a shared approach to child well being is for all children in NSW to be healthy, happy and safe and to be able to grow up belonging in families and communities where they have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

It is therefore important that children and families who are considered at risk of significant harm receive early intervention and support to achieve positive outcomes.

**Definitions:**

**The Act:** Refers to the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act* 1998

**Child:** According to the Act,is a person who is under the age of 16 years.

**Young Person** Under the Act, a young person is defined as a person aged 16 years or above, but under the age of 18 years

**Parent or Carer:** “Parent” is defined in Section 3 of the Act as a person having the parental responsibility for the child or young person. This may therefore apply to persons other than the biological parent – such as persons exercising parental responsibility within the kinship group of the child or young person.

**Harm:** Physical and/or psychological damage or injury experienced by a child or young person as a consequence of one or more of physical, psychological or sexual abuse, ill-treatment or neglect. The current and future impact of the harm needs to be considered in making the decision about substantiation of harm.

**Risk Significant of Harm:** What is meant by "significant" in the phrase "to a significant extent" is that which is sufficiently serious to warrant a response by a statutory authority, irrespective of a family's consent.

What is significant is not minor or trivial and may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child's or young person's safety, welfare or wellbeing.

In the case of an unborn child, what is significant is not minor or trivial and may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child.

**Mandatory reporters**

A mandatory reporter is an individual required by law to report to Community Services when they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child, is at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect and that those grounds are identified during the course of a persons work.

All staff members of Toronto Community Child Care Centre are mandatory reporters.

While it is mandatory to report children aged 0-15 years at risk of significant harm, it is not mandatory to report young people aged 16-17 years or unborn children.

Professional judgment should be used in deciding whether concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of an unborn child or a young person warrants a report to Community Services.

**When to make report**

The Mandatory Reporter Guide has been developed to assist reporters to decide if any of the following conditions are present to a significant extent:

* + physical abuse
  + neglect
* supervision
* physical shelter/environment
* food
* medical care
* mental health care
* education
* sexual abuse
* problematic sexual behaviour
* psychological harm
* relinquishing care
* carer concerns
* parent / carer substance abuse
* parent / carer mental health
* parent / carer domestic violence
* unborn child.

A series of acts or omissions that when viewed together may establish a pattern of risk of significant harm (cumulative impact) may also be an indicator that a child is at risk of significant harm.

Where a staff member has reasonable grounds to suspect risk of significant harm, they should first use the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) to assess whether their concerns meet the threshold of risk of significant harm.

The MRG will assist mandatory reporters to determine whether they should:

* Make a report to the Community Services Helpline
* Make a referral to a Regional intake and Referral Service, or to other support agencies.
* Document and continue the relationship.

However, if there is an immediate danger to the child or young person the Police and/or the Helpline should be contacted directly.

Reasonable grounds refers to the need to have an objective basis for suspecting that a child or young person may be at risk of significant harm, based on:

* first hand observations of the child, young person or family
* what the child, young person, parent or another person has disclosed

**How to make a report**

The Child Protection Helpline is the contact for mandatory and non-mandatory reporters who have concerns about a child’s safety, welfare and wellbeing.

Phone 133627 for mandatory reporters

132111 for non-mandatory reporters

* Reports to the Child Protection Helpline are confidential.
* Any person who makes a report is afforded protection by law if they make a report in good faith.
* The Child Protection Hotline will tell mandatory reporters whether the report they have made meets the threshold of significant harm or not.

**Staff Procedure for Reporting Children at Risk of Significant Harm.**

* Staff will document any concerns, observations, or disclosures made to them.
* Staff will notify the Nominated Supervisor if they consider a child to be at risk of significant harm.
* The Nominated Supervisor/ staff member will use the on line MRG to establish if a report should be made. The MRG report will be printed and filed on the child’s file in the office.
* The Nominated Supervisor/staff member will take the action recommended by the MRG. This may include making a report to the Child Protection Hotline.
* When the MRG advises that the report does not meet the statutory threshold, staff will continue to offer referrals to local services and work collaboratively with other organisations to help keep children safe.
* All staff will note that they are Mandatory reporters and are responsible for reporting children at risk of significant harm.
* All information will remain confidential, and be filed in the office.

**Important Telephone Contact Numbers and Websites**

* Community Services’ Child Protection Helpline for mandatory reporters – 133627
* Mandatory Reporters Guide –

[www.sdm.community.nsw.gov.au/mrg/app/summary.page](http://www.sdm.community.nsw.gov.au/mrg/app/summary.page)

* Department of Premier and Cabinet *Keep Them Safe* Website –

www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/home

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1, 15, 16, 37