

PROPOSED INCIDENT RESPONSE PROCEDURE

SUBMITTED BY NORTHAM RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE WITH ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO WA DEPARTEMENT OF EDUCATION CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

INCIDENT: OBSERVED, REPORTED OR ACTUAL SEXUAL ABUSE OF STUDENT

LEVEL OF RISK

Everyone working in the college is responsible for the care and protection of the children and reporting information about child maltreatment concerns such as sexual maltreatment.

Sexual maltreatment is defined as exposing or subjecting a child to sexual activity, behaviour or threat that is inappropriate to the developmental level or age of the child and/or is an illegal activity.

Employed should model behaviours that uphold the dignity and safety of all children and staff are expected to take all reasonable actions to ensure the safety and protection of children whilst in residence, during all college activities, on and off the college site.

We recognise that there are children with increased vulnerability to maltreatment and is committed to their care and protection.

Staff, given their close interactions with school children, play an important role in the detection of child sexual abuse and the provision of support and assistance to children who are sexually abused or may be the subject of abuse.

A child protection concern may arise from any action or inaction which is inconsistent with the care and protection of a child. This may include sexual abuse of a child. It may involve repeated or persistent maltreatment, or it may arise from a single incident. It may be observed evidence of risk or indicators, reports of maltreatment by a person without parental responsibility for the child and/or a disclosure of information provided directly by a child or parent/carer that describes or alleges maltreatment.

Maltreatment refers to when a child or young person has been subjected to physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse and/or neglect, the severity and/or persistence of which has resulted in or is likely to result in significant harm. (Statutory Child Protection, Department for Community Development, 2004 p 3).

A child may be maltreated by a parent/carer, another adult person or another child who may or may not be older

IMMEDIATE ACTION

To reduce the risk of suicidal and self harming children, decisive action must be taken by college staff regarding any concerns they have about a child and as early as possible.

Sexual behaviour between children may be an indicator of maltreatment and therefore considered to be child protection issue. Sexual behaviour between children may also involve employee duty of care responsibilities.

Staff must be aware of the immediate needs of the children making disclosures and respond accordingly. It is not easy for children to disclose maltreatment and they will usually only do so with great hesitation. They may hint or tell only part of the story to gauge the staff member's reaction before disclosing more fully. They may have been coerced, bribed or threatened into secrecy. They may be fearful of being blamed; of other people's reactions and of the consequences disclosure will have for everyone involved. Children are likely to feel guilt because the maltreatment occurred, because they told another person before telling a parent/carer or because of dobbing in the parent/carer or friend.

While staff should be conscious of the requirements for confidentiality they should not provide undertakings which are inconsistent with their reporting obligations. Staff must communicate concerns of child maltreatment to the Manager. To the extent possible, children should be informed of the obligations of reporting in this policy. Whenever possible the most likely responses to these actions should also be described.

Where there is suspected or alleged maltreatment or misconduct, staff may not disclose or make use of the information in a manner that breaches confidentiality.

Staff are advised to:

- . Use protective interrupting if children begin to disclose in a public area.
- . Acknowledge that you have heard them and stop them from disclosing any further.
- . Be supportive and gently indicate that they might tell you about it in a more private situation.
- . Quietly arrange to see them as soon as possible, in a situation away from other children.
- . Listen attentively to children in a private location within the college whenever possible.
- . Be supportive, understanding and empathic with children.

- . Acknowledge that it is difficult to talk about such things.
- . Try to identify children's fears.
- . Let students tell the event in their own words, accept what is said; only the minimum of information is required.
- . Reassure children that it is right to tell, that they believed and that they are not to blame:
- . Be calm and non-judgmental:
- . Establish clear limits on confidentiality by telling children that a report will be made to a person who will be able to provide help and protection;
- . Allow children the option of support during any interview on college property without the parents/carers knowledge, and reassure them of the availability of continuing support;
- . Explain what will happen next
- . Try to stay with the child until necessary steps have been taken to ensure their safety and support.

College Staff must be mindful that they DO NOT;

- . Push for details or conduct an investigation as other agencies have this responsibility
- . Express judgement or blame of the child, perpetrator or family
- . Get angry, upset or show shock:
- . Put words in children's mouths or interrogate as this could jeopardise the interviewing process of DCD and police
- . Promise not to tell when there are clear limits on confidentiality
- . Give a lecture about right and wrong
- . Say forget or you will get over it or other such minimalising statements
- . Give excessive pity
- . Engage in staff room discussion about the disclosure

Staff should be aware that a disclosure can arouse for themselves strong feelings of shock, anger and helplessness. It is important to control these feelings; they can be worked through after disclosure. Support for staff is available through their line manager or the CHSHA employee assistance program.

ASSESSMENT/PRIORTISING PROCEDURE

Student disclosures must be responded to appropriately by staff and the child supported. If a disclosure from a student is ignored or dismissed the student continues to be placed at risk.

The role of college staff is not investigative in matters of child maltreatment. Staff must report concerns to the Manager who will action them appropriately. Staff may seek advice from professional colleagues to clarify concerns and determine ongoing support for a child. Such consultation must be documented

REPORTING PROCEDURE; WHO WHEN WHAT

Every staff member should recognise the risk factors and indicators of child maltreatment to identify children who may be at risk and communicate these to their line manager, either verbally or in writing. The Line Manager must report the concerns, to the College Manager, who should then report the concerns, as appropriate, to the CHSHA Director, Department for Child Protection or the Western Australian Police Service.(or state services as appropriate)

If the concern relates to the conduct of a person other than a CHSHA employee, the Manager must report the concerns as above. If the concern relates to possible criminal conduct, the matter must be reported to the police.

If the concern relates to the conduct of a CHSHA employee the Manager must report the matter to Director and relevant state Complaints Management unit.

If the concern relates to the conduct of the Manager, it must be reported to the Director who assumes the actions and responsibilities of a manager as described in these procedures.

In order to avoid interfering with any investigative process initiated by DCP or the police, the Manager should seek advice from DCD of the police as is appropriate prior to informing the parent/carer of a concern of maltreatment.

REVIEW OF PROGRESS (OUTCOME)

Case Management is collaborative planning between college staff, school staff, and key stakeholders to identify, monitor, assess and report child maltreatment. The parents/caregivers, the child, student services, education assistants, Aboriginal Education Officers, DCP, Department of Health, the police and the Department of Justice may be involved.

DOCUMENTATION TO BE COMPLETED

- . All disclosures, subsequent discussion and actions should be documented. Written records of all concerns of maltreatment and disclosures that form the basis of a maltreatment report must be securely stored by the manager. This information must be provided to DCP and the Police upon request.
- . The records should be factual about observable events and not an opinion, and should include the dates and times of observations or disclosures with exact or as close to exact wording of statement made by a child.
- . Managers must maintain written records of all communication with DCP or the police and subsequent actions.