

WORKING WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES



Document Status	DRAFT	FOR APPROVAL	APPROVED
Document Number:	6.1.23		
Version:	11		
Policy owner:	General Manager Practice Development and Innovation		
Policy category:	Programs		
Level of approval:	Quality, Risk, Compliance and Policy Committee		
Policy Approved by:	Quality, Risk, Compliance and Policy Committee		
Date Approved:	June 2023		
Effective date:	March 2013		
Review Frequency:	Three Years		
Review Date:	June 2026		
Purpose:	To ensure that the wellbeing of children, young people and families underpins decision making and program planning, delivery and review.		
Relevant legislation and/or standards:	<p><u>Commonwealth</u> Family Law Act 1975 (Cth) National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (2018)</p> <p><u>NSW</u> Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW) Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW) Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW) NSW Child Safe Standards</p> <p><u>NT</u> Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 (NT) Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007 (NT) Information Sharing Guidelines</p> <p><u>Victoria</u> Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 (Vic) Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic) Reportable Conduct Scheme Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) Victorian Child Safe Standards Child Information Sharing – Vic Child Information Sharing form Child Information Sharing Authorisation form</p>		
Risk Awareness:	Governance, Commercial and Legal, Programs and Services, Strategic		
Related Documents:	Practice Framework Duty of Care Responding to suspected and disclosed sexual and other criminal abuse Child Safety Code of Conduct		
Scope:	All staff		
Definitions: Intersectionality	The ways in which different aspects of a person's identity that can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. These can include Aboriginality, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, colour, nationality, refugee or asylum seeker background, visa status, language or religion.		
Responsibilities:	All staff		

Policy:	<p>Jesuit Social Services believes that we are all held in a web of relationships, and that families, however they are constructed, are central to the wellbeing of children, young people and adults. Sometimes however, vulnerable children, young people and entire families may require additional supports.</p> <p>We will ensure vulnerable children, young people and families are provided support that ensures their wellbeing and safety. Including needs related to intersectionality.</p> <p>We will consult with and involve relevant agencies such as specialist child and/or family services where they are needed.</p> <p>We also have specific legislative responsibility in relation to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people - including those who are utilising our services and children who accompany parents/carers utilising our programs. We will share information as appropriate to ensure wellbeing and safety under Child Information and/or Family Violence Information sharing schemes in the relevant state or territory as well as consulting with or reporting to child protection services and police as required by legislation.</p> <p>Jesuit Social Services ensures children will be supervised at all times while on Jesuit Social Services' premises by workers and volunteers holding the relevant worker accreditation scheme checks and in environments that meet O/WHs standards.</p>
---------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1. PROCEDURE

Jesuit Social Services staff recognise the importance of the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in their programs. All staff receive training in child wellbeing and safety when they commence employment. They also receive training in strength based, family-focussed and trauma informed approaches where relevant to their roles. Staff development will maintain currency of skills in this area.

Jesuit Social Services also has a Child Safety & Professional Standards Officer (General Manager Practice, Development and Innovation) whose role is to oversee the adherence to practice and policy standards and to act as a resource for staff, students on placement and volunteers regarding the safety and wellbeing of children in our organisation.

Jesuit Social Services programs involved with vulnerable young people and their families/carers, including families with an unborn child, may consider that a family requires additional support and may consider reporting or referring a concern about the child or young person to relevant services and/or child protection in the jurisdiction within which they are working. Where there is an immediate concern for the safety of any participant, police or other relevant emergency service should be called and line management notified. Where the person at risk is a child, line management should also be consulted in relation to a notification to child protection.

Referrals to other specialist services, where there is not an immediate risk and where the family is both willing and able to take a protective role will depend on the services available within the jurisdiction. These may include specialist child and family services, child and adolescent mental health services and/or specialist family violence support services. The following lists some key services by jurisdiction:

- Orange Door (Vic) or local family violence support service (NSW, NT)

1.1 IN VICTORIA

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) **Child Protection Intake** (Vic).

A report should be made to **Child Protection** when concerns are serious and include:

- Physical abuse or, non accidental or unexplained injury to a child or young person
- Disclosure of sexual abuse by a child or young person, or a combination of factors suggesting the likelihood of sexual abuse (eg. the child exhibiting concerning behaviours or

where a known or suspected perpetrator has had unsupervised contact with the child or young person)

- Emotional abuse and ill treatment of a child or young person
- Persistent neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision where there is a likelihood of significant harm to the child
- Persistent family violence or parental/carer substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability – where there is a likelihood of significant harm to the child
- Where a child or young person's actions place them at risk of significant harm
- Where a child or young person appears to have been abandoned and there is no person adequately caring for the child or young person.

See Types and Indicators of Child Abuse at Appendix A.

Child Protection has an afterhours' service that is available outside of normal business hours.

Child FIRST may be the best way of connecting children, young people and their families/carers to the services they need when there are concerns about any of the following, and the family are willing to engage with the supports:

- Significant parenting problems that may be affecting the child or young person's development
- Severe conflict
- Mental illness, substance abuse, disability or bereavement
- Social isolation
- Social or economic disadvantage that may adversely impact on a child or young person's care or development.

Child FIRST is also a useful point for secondary consultation.

Procedure for contacting Child FIRST or Child Protection

1. In all instances where there are concerns about the welfare of a child or young person, the degree of risk should be discussed with line management. The decision about whether the risk is sufficient to make a referral to **Child FIRST** or a notification to **Child Protection** or police will be made in consultation with the relevant Manager.
2. Where possible concerns should be discussed with the parent/carer.
3. Jesuit Social Services staff must record concerns and discussions accurately and concisely in participant files.

Child FIRST and **Child Protection** will request information including:

- Name, address and age of the child/young person
- Reason for notification
- Assessment of immediate danger
- Current whereabouts of child/young person
- Schools/groups or other professionals involved with the child/young person/family/carer
- Known medical conditions
- Your relationship to the child
- Whether the family/carer is aware that a notification is being made and their possible response to Child Protection.

A notification can be made despite gaps in this information.

Child FIRST and **Child Protection** will carry out a risk assessment and provide advice/take action as necessary.

1.2 NORTHERN TERRITORY

Territory Families (Child Protection) (NT).

Where a child in the Northern Territory is suspected of being exposed to Family Violence or has disclosed exposure to Family Violence, a report must also be made to the police.

When you should report

In the Northern Territory, you must make a report if you reasonably believe a child has been harmed or exploited, or that a child is likely to be harmed or exploited or if there is suspected or disclosed exposure to Family Violence (a report must also be made to police at the same time as Child Protection).

This is a legal responsibility under the Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 and is called mandatory reporting.

Your report should include any relevant information about your concerns for the child's safety and wellbeing.

You don't need proof of harm or abuse to report your concerns - you just need a reasonable belief that a child has been harmed or is likely to be harmed.

If you are worried about neglect or harm to a child but are not sure if it's something you should report, you should talk about your concerns with professional staff at the Child Abuse Hotline on 1800 700 250.

You are safeguarded under the law from legal or professional liability if you make a report in good faith.

How to report

In an emergency call 000 and ask for police.

If it's not an emergency, call police on 131 444 or contact your local police station.

You can also report suspected child abuse and neglect to either:

- the child protection reporting line on 1800 700 250
- or Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

1.3 NEW SOUTH WALES

Child protection helpline (NSW). Families NSW may be the best way of connecting children, young people and their families/carers to the services they need when there are concerns about any of the following:

- helping parents to build their skills and confidence in parenting
- supporting parents and carers so they can respond to problems early
- building communities that support children and families
- improving the way agencies work together to make sure families get the services they need.

Reporting a child at risk

Domestic Violence line	1800 656 463
Link2home Homelessness	1800 152 152
Link2Home Veterans and Ex-Service	1800 326 989
Child Protection Helpline	13 21 11

A report should be made to the NSW Government Family and Community Services (FACS) Child Protection Helpline if you think a child or young person is at risk of harm from abuse or neglect.

Procedure for reporting

Step 1 - GET SUFFICIENT INFORMATION

Get essential details, where possible:

- child or young person's details (name, address, DOB, details of siblings)
- incident details (date, type of risk, person's causing or contributing to harm)
- impact of the incident on the child or young person
- network of support around the young person.

Step 2 – DECIDE WHAT TO DO

Use all of the information available to you to appraise the risk, needs and strengths of the family.

Step 3 – USE THE MANDATORY REPORTERS GUIDE (MRG)

Mandatory reporters include social workers, caseworkers and youth worker.

- If the outcome of the MRG is 'Immediate Report to the Child Protection Helpline' or 'Report to the Child Protection Helpline', contact the Child Protection Helpline and have ready the essential details from Step 1 and the outcome of the MRG. You can also make an eReport for non-immediate matters <https://kidsreport.facs.nsw.gov.au>.
- If the outcome of the MRG is 'Contact your CWU (Child Wellbeing Unit)' or 'Continue to monitor and support' – go to Step 4
- Even if a report is required, proceed to Step 4
- It is recommended that mandatory reporters complete the MRG on each occasion they have risk concerns, regardless of their level of experience or expertise. Each circumstance is different and every child and young person is unique.

Step 4 – FIND LOCAL HELP

Your service -Consider what additional steps your service can take, including:

- whether your service is best placed to discuss your concerns with the family
- whether your service can offer to provide additional interventions or change your current interventions to further address risk factors.

Beyond your service - Explore appropriate support services for the child/young person and their family. The following options may assist you:

- Where you have access, call your CWU to discuss how you can appropriately assist the child within the capacity of your role and to get advice about referral pathways. Call Health CWU on 1300 480 420 or Call Education CWU on 9269 9400
- Contact your local Family Referral Service (FRS) if you would like help referring the family, child or young person to local support services such as housing or respite (<http://www.familyreferralservice.com.au>).
- Visit the Human Services Network (HSNet) website to self-access a broad range of services <https://www.hsnet.nsw.gov.au/>
- Contact NSW Family Services Inc. (FamS) to access support to non-government, not-for-profit organisation staff working with vulnerable children and families <https://www.fams.asn.au/>.
- Education staff working for non-government schools should call the Association of Independent Schools (Ph. 02 9299 2845) or the Catholic Education Commission NSW (Ph. 02 9287 1555). Note: Catholic system reporters should first seek assistance from their Diocesan office or local Catholic schools authority.

1.4 RISK MINIMISATION

Minimising risk when Jesuit Social Services is supporting families with children/young people on site at Jesuit Social Services premises.

In general when working with children/young people and their families, Jesuit Social Services is responsible for ensuring that:

- Effective measures are implemented to eliminate or reduce the risk to children and young people's health and safety while with Jesuit Social Services. This should include appropriate staff to child ratios to enable appropriate levels of supervision.
- Referrals are made to children's support services and programs as appropriate.
- Services are conducted on an outreach basis where possible.
- When a parent or carer attends Jesuit Social Services offices, the worker will determine whether the matter can be dealt with solely through the provision of information and in this situation the child may attend the interview with the parent.
- Parents requiring more in-depth counselling/support will be asked, and if necessary assisted, to arrange childcare while this counselling occurs.
- Parents wishing to attend Jesuit Social Services programs on an ongoing basis will need to make their own childcare arrangements. Jesuit Social Services staff will provide parents with information from local councils on community childcare including occasional care, family day etc.
- If parents constitute the major component of a new Jesuit Social Services program, staff should consider parents' childcare needs and develop protocols with local community childcare services as part of the program development and implementation.
- Parents attending Jesuit Social Services Perry House accommodation facility may receive visits from their children if the visit is arranged in advance, a Jesuit Social Services worker is present at the site and the other residents have been informed of the visit.
- Parents attending Jesuit Social Services Rooming House accommodation should ensure contact visits with their children are made off site and with the prior knowledge of their case worker.

1.5 TRAINING

All staff, volunteers and students on placement are required to undertake child safety and wellbeing training when they commence this is supplemented by training and information updates coordinated by the Child Safety & Professional Standards officer on an annual basis.

END OF DOCUMENT

Document history table

Version	Reason for update	Date approved
5	Review due	Dec 2015
6	New legislation added and minor content amendments	August 2018
7	New legislation on Child Information Sharing	January 2019
8	Updated NT & NSW requirements	May 2019
9	Updated relevant legislation section	January 2020
10	Updated in light of new NSW and Victorian Child Safe Standards	March 2022
11	Updated legislation	June 2023

Appendix A: Types and Indicators of Child Abuse

There are various types of child abuse including physical harm, sexual harm, emotional harm and neglect.

Please note: The presence of an indicator **does not always** indicate that a child is being abused; and the absence of the indicators listed below does not indicate that the child is **not** being abused.

Physical Harm

Physical indicators may include:

- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts, welts, fractured/broken bones
- Poisoning
- Internal injuries
- Shaking or strangulation injuries.

Behavioural indicators may include:

- Disclosure
- The child or young person expressing little emotion when hurt
- Unlikely explanation of and hiding of injuries
- The child or young person demonstrating a fear of parents/carers and being reluctant to go home
- The child or young person showing fear when hearing others cry or shout
- The child or young person being excessively friendly to strangers
- Passivity and quietness, nervousness, hyperactivity, aggression.

Sexual Abuse

Physical indicators may include:

- Injury to the genital or rectal area, vaginal bleeding or discharge
- Discomfort in urinating or defecating
- Sexually Transmitted Infections or frequent urinary tract infections
- Anxiety related illnesses.

Behavioural indicators may include:

- Disclosure
- Persistent and age inappropriate sexual activity or sexually explicit and age inappropriate drawings
- Regressive behaviour such as bedwetting and speech loss
- Self harming behaviour such as substance use, sex work and self mutilation
- Rocking sucking and biting
- Signs of depression
- Complaining of headaches or stomach pains or difficulties sleeping.

Neglect

Physical indicators may include:

- Frequent hunger and/or malnutrition
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing
- Lack of supervision
- Medical needs not attended to
- Failure to thrive.

Behavioural indicators may include:

- Stealing food
- Staying at school outside school hours
- Tiredness, falling asleep
- Substance use
- Aggression
- Inability to relate well to peers
- Indiscriminate with affections.