

# QA<sub>2</sub> – REPORTING AND DOCUMENTING CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS PROCEDURE

## INFORMATION

It is vital that all concerns are documented, and if required, reported, as soon as possible to ensure that children are protected, and support mechanisms can be put in place. All educators, staff and volunteers are committed to identifying, documenting and reporting child protection concerns related to the children in our care and any underage educators within our service. All educators, staff and volunteers understand that they are mandatory reporters.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

All team members, visitors, students and volunteers must comply with this procedure.

## PROCEDURE

### IDENTIFYING IF A CHILD MAY HAVE BEEN HARMED

All educators, staff and volunteers are trained in child protection, including the indicators of abuse/neglect. Types of abuse can include neglect, physical abuse, emotional psychological abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence. With constant technological advancements it is important for team members to be aware that abuse can also occur when children access electronic platforms. For detailed information regarding indicators of abuse/neglect, please see our "*Indicators of abuse/neglect Tool*" and if in doubt, please speak immediately to the Nominated Supervisor/Responsible Person in Charge.

### DOCUMENTING A SUSPICION OF HARM

A "suspicion of harm" is where you have a reasonable suspicion that a child (including underage team members) has suffered, is suffering, or is at unacceptable risk of suffering, significant harm.

If a team member has a suspicion of harm they will:

- Record their concerns as soon as possible, noting as many of the facts as possible, using non-judgmental, opinion free language – the record should include:
  - The time, date and place of when you became suspicious
  - The circumstances that led you to become suspicious
  - If possible, the time, date and place of the suspected abuse/neglect
  - Full details of the suspected abuse
  - The date of the report and team member signature
- Record their own observations as well as precise details of any discussion with a parent (who may for example explain a noticeable mark on a child).

- Not conduct their own investigation
- Bring their concerns to the Nominated Supervisor/Responsible Person in Charge immediately
- Ensure all relevant paperwork is completed, noting that depending on the situation, incident reports or serious incident notifications may need to be done
- Ensure that the records are stored and maintained in line with privacy and confidentiality requirements

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## DOCUMENTING A DISCLOSURE OF HARM

A “disclosure of harm” is where someone, including a child, tells you that harm has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen, to a child.

When receiving a disclosure of harm, team members will:

- Talk to the person (child, parent, other adult) in a private place (if appropriate)
- Stay calm and not display expressions of shock or panic
- Not promise to keep a secret
- Only ask enough questions to confirm the need to report – do not ‘interview’ or probe. Questions such as “What happened next?” or “When did this happen?” are acceptable, but do not ask “Why?” questions
- Avoid going over the information time and time again; you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report
- Tell the child/person they have done the right thing
- If talking to a child:
  - state clearly that the abuse is not the child’s fault
  - be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace
  - do not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to
- Document the disclosure as soon as possible to ensure the details are accurately captured – documentation should include:
  - The time, date and place of the disclosure
  - Detail surrounding how the disclosure came to be made
  - A word for word description of the what was said
  - Any actions that were or are being taken
  - The date of the report, and the team member signature.
- Bring the disclosure to the Nominated Supervisor/Responsible Person in Charge immediately
- Ensure that the records are stored and maintained in line with privacy and confidentiality requirements.

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## REPORTING CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

- It is vital that all child protection concerns and incidents are immediately reported to the relevant authorities and organisations. In Queensland these are the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety and the Early Childhood Education and Care – Department of Education. The Nominated Supervisor will report the concern/incident to the Regulatory Authority within the regulated timeframe.

- It doesn't matter if you think that someone else may have reported the concern, or if you had previously made a report – if you have information that leads you to believe that a child is at risk of harm, you must make a report.
- Remember, proof is not required to support a claim and it is not the responsibility of staff or educators to determine or investigate whether child abuse, neglect or a criminal offence has actually occurred; this is the role of the relevant organisation and authorities to whom the concern is reported to.
- If you are confused or in doubt about whether to report, contact your relevant authority – they are the experts in this field and will make the determination.
- If your concerns are about the parent/guardian of the child, do not inform them that you have contacted the authorities. If your concerns are about a person who is not the parent/guardian, your Nominated Supervisor, in conjunction with their Area Manager, will determine if/when and how the parent of the child will be notified.

## CHILD SAFETY AND TECHNOLOGY

Technology adds further risks to children's health and safety. Children can be exposed to inappropriate media and online predators when they have access to the internet and electronic devices.

- Educators will ensure children do not access devices without supervision and only under very strict conditions (ie. For research purposes or to support a specific learning program like ELLA)
- Educators understand that a child being exposed to adult content online or digitally is a child safety concern and should be reported as such
- Educators will step in if they witness an adult taking inappropriate photos/videos of a child
- Educators will act on any images/videos of children that display maltreatment or abuse in line with this procedure

See below for a detailed overview of the relevant authorities that need to be notified of child protection concerns, noting that the authority may also direct you to contact other organisations or the police after you have made your report.

*Please note – educators and staff should contact the police on '000' if there is an immediate danger to a child and intervene instantly if safe to do so. Police should also be called immediately if the child has been the victim of a criminal offence.*

State/Territory	Authority/Organisation to be notified
Queensland	<a href="#">Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety</a> Brisbane and Moreton Bay - 1300 682 254  Far North Queensland - 1300 684 062  North Queensland - 1300 706 147  South East (Logan, Gold Coast and Bayside) - 1300 679 849  South West (Darling Downs) Toowoomba - 1300 683 390

	<p>South West (West Moreton) Ipswich - 1800 316 855</p> <p>Sunshine Coast and Central Queensland - 1300 703 762</p> <p>After hours service: 1800 177 135</p>
	<p>Early Childhood Education and Care - Department of Education  <a href="https://www.qld.gov.au/families/babies/childcare/contacts/regional">https://www.qld.gov.au/families/babies/childcare/contacts/regional</a></p>

#### AFTER A REPORT HAS BEEN MADE

- The relevant team members(s) and the Nominated Supervisor will engage in a review after the report has been made to critically reflect on the event and the process undertaken to report. Any areas for improvement that are identified will be actioned as soon as possible.
- Staff who were involved in receiving the disclosure and making the report will be offered support via the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or similar process/system.

#### DOCUMENT CONTROL

Date Reviewed	Modifications
Oct 2019	Reviewed and created new policy document and format.
Oct 2024	Updated contact details
June 2025	Updated to explicitly include underage team members as children for the purpose of child protection matters
August 2025	Reviewed and updated to align with child safety regulation updates – added technology considerations and listed types of abuse