

Child Safe

Policy Statement

The Mornington Peninsula Shire is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We support and respect all children, as well as our employees. We have zero tolerance of child abuse and have robust policies and procedures to protect children from abuse and respond to any allegations or safety concerns.

We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability. We are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and providing education and training to employees to achieve these commitments.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire has a Child Safe Policy which addresses Mornington Peninsula Shire's legislative responsibility of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 to provide a Child Safe Organisation.

Mornington Peninsula Shire takes all allegations of abuse seriously and will respond to all allegations fairly and appropriately. Anyone raising a child safety concern has the right to remain anonymous unless required by law. All child safety concerns will be recorded on an incident report form and register and stored securely.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012

Part 4.2: Children's Health and Safety

Division 1: Health, safety and wellbeing of children

- Regulation 84: Awareness of child protection law

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Part 6: Operating an Education and Care Service

Section 166: Offence to use inappropriate discipline

Section 167: Offence relating to protection of children from harm or hazards

National Quality Standard 2012

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety

Standard 2.3: Each child is protected

Element 2.3.2: Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury

Element 2.3.4: Educators, coordinators and staff members are aware of their roles and responsibilities to respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect

Definitions

Reasonable Grounds

Any person may form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection after becoming aware that a child or young person's health, safety or wellbeing is at risk and the child's parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child. There may be reasonable grounds for forming such a belief if:

- A child or young person states that they have been abused.
- A child or young person states that they know someone who has been abused.
- Someone who knows the child or young person states that the child or young person has been abused.
- A child shows signs of being abused
- The staff member is aware of persistent family violence or parental substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability that is impacting on the child or young person's safety, stability or development.
- The staff member observes signs or indicators of abuse, including non-accidental or unexplained injury, persistent neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision.
- A child's actions or behaviour may place them at risk of significant harm and the child's parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child.

Child FIRST:

For some families knowing how and where to access the service system can be challenging. Professionals may also have difficulty navigating the service system to refer children, young people and families to appropriate services that will meet their needs.

Child FIRST sites have been established in 24 sub-regional catchments across the state and provide a central, community-based referral point to a range of community based Family Services and other supports.

The primary purpose of Child FIRST is to ensure that vulnerable children, young people and their families are linked effectively into relevant support services.

A referral to Child FIRST may be the best way of connecting children, young people and their families to the services they need, where families exhibit any of the following factors that may affect a child's safety, stability or development:

- Significant parenting deficits that may be affecting the child's development
- Serious family conflict, including family breakdown

- Families under pressure due to a family member's physical or mental illness, substance abuse, disability or bereavement
- Young, isolated and/or unsupported families
- Significant social or economic disadvantage that may adversely impact on a child's care or development

Procedure

If an educator and/or any member of an educators household (family day care) including children are suspected of child abuse or neglect:

- Coordination team and/or team leader will contact the Child FIRST Program and/or Child Protection Program to discuss the allegation. The Police may also be contacted by the service and/or child first/child protection
- Service coordinator and/or team leader may suspend an educator immediately after discussion with Child FIRST/Child Protection Program. Depending on the discussions and subsequent advice, the service coordinator and/or team leader may not be able to discuss the allegation in detail with the educator
- Once the allegation is handed over to Child FIRST/Child Protection Program, they may commence an investigation
- Once the investigation has been completed by Child FIRST/Child Protection Program and/or Victoria Police, a decision will be made by the Manager, Child Youth and Family Care and the team leader education and care services as to the ongoing licence/employment status of the educator
- All educators and coordination teams will follow the procedure outlined in the "Protocol" between The Department of Human Services Child Protection Program and the Mornington Peninsula Shire
- The service coordinator and/or team leader will provide support to the educator which may include referrals to specialist support

If a parent / guardian or another person are suspected of child abuse or neglect

- Any employee who has reasonable grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify their coordination team if they are concerned in any way regarding the safety and wellbeing of a child registered with the service.

- The coordination team will discuss the concerns with the educator and decide on the appropriate action to take
- Educators may contact Child FIRST/Child Protection Program directly if they wish; however the coordination team and/or team leader must be informed of the situation if Child FIRST/Child Protection Program have been notified directly
- The coordination team will ensure that educators receive support which may include referrals to specialist support

Sources and further reading

- Department of Human Services; Southern Metropolitan Region Child Protection Program (2009)
 - Protocol between Mornington Peninsula Shire and Department of Human Services (2008)
 - Child FIRST – Every Child Every Chance fact sheet November 2008 (sourced May 2012)
 - *Child Wise* www.childwise.net
 - *UNICEF-Convention on the Rights of the Child* www.unicef.org/crc/
 - *The Charter of Human Rights*
 - Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015
 - MPS Child Safe Policy 2017
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