
Child Protection Procedure for Recognising and Responding to Child Abuse or Neglect

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington (the University) has in place a Child Protection Policy (the Policy) which is intended to protect the safety and promote the wellbeing of children aged under 18 years who are receiving Children’s Services from the University.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Procedure is to set out the obligations and actions required of the University in relation to the identification of and response to suspected child abuse and neglect.

2. Application of Procedure

- 2.1 This Procedure applies to all Members of the University Community, particularly those who are involved in providing Children’s Services as part of their work or study at the University.

Procedure Content

3. General

- 3.1 The Child’s safety is always the paramount consideration in the process for reporting suspected abuse or neglect.
- 3.2 No decisions or actions taken in respect of suspected or actual child abuse or neglect should be made by anyone in isolation unless there are concerns for the immediate safety of the Child.
- 3.3 A consultative approach is essential to ensure the safety of the Child and the Member of the University Community. Situations will vary and it is important that any potential concerns identified are raised with the appropriate people in accordance with this Procedure. Further advice and guidance is available from the Child Protection Coordinator.
- 3.4 Notwithstanding this Procedure, any person who believes that a Child or young person has been, or is likely to be harmed, ill-treated, abused (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), neglected, or deprived, or who has concerns about the wellbeing of a Child or young person, may report the matter to the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki or the New Zealand Police. In certain situations, a Protected Disclosure may be made in accordance with the Whistleblower Policy.

4. Responding to suspected child abuse

- 4.1 In cases where a Member of the University Community has a concern about a Child being or likely to be abused by an adult or another Child, that person must report their concern to the appropriate person. In particular:
 - (a) Members of the University Community: report to an appropriate senior person in the Child’s location and the Member’s University line manager or equivalent (if different).
 - (b) Students on placement: report to a senior person or supervisor in the Child’s location and their University supervisor, course coordinator, or programme director (or equivalent).
- 4.2 Where the matter has been reported to a University manager/supervisor/course

coordinator/programme director (or equivalent), that person will immediately refer the matter to the Child Protection Coordinator for action.

- 4.3 A referral to Oranga Tamariki - Ministry for Children may be made at any time in consultation with the Child Protection Coordinator.

5. Child abuse – indicators, identification and responding to a disclosure

Note: Please see [Oranga Tamariki - Ministry for Children, Safer Organisations Safer Children](#) for further information about indicators of child abuse, identifying child abuse and responding to a child when the child discloses abuse.

- 5.1 Indicators are signs or symptoms that, when found either on their own or in various combinations, point to possible abuse, family violence, or neglect. Indicators do not necessarily prove or mean that a Child has been harmed. They are clues that abuse may have occurred and that a Child may require help or protection. These indicators may include:
- Physical signs of abuse e.g. unexplained injuries, burns, fractures, bruising, unusual or excessive itching, genital injuries, sexually transmitted diseases; physical signs of neglect e.g. looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, hungry, underweight.
 - Developmental delays of abuse or neglect e.g. small for their age, cognitive delays, falling behind in school, poor speech and social skills.
 - Emotional abuse or neglect e.g. sleep problems, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness, evidence of self-harm.
 - Behavioural concerns of abuse e.g. age-inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place; behavioural concerns of abuse and neglect e.g. disengagement, neediness, eating disorders, substance abuse, aggression.
 - The Child (or potentially others) talking about things that indicate abuse (sometimes called an allegation or disclosure).
 - Medical neglect e.g. persistent nappy rash or skin disorders, other untreated medical issues.
- 5.2 Every situation is different and it is important to consider all available information about the Child and their environment before reaching conclusions. For example, behavioural concerns may be the result of life events, such as divorce, accidental injury, or the arrival of a new sibling.
- 5.3 There may be a range of situations where child abuse could be suspected. Some guidance is set out below about responding to a Child when the Child discloses abuse. However, Members of the University Community can always seek guidance and advice from their manager/supervisor/course coordinator/programme director (or equivalent) and the Child Protection Coordinator:

Listen to the Child	Disclosures by children are often subtle and need to be handled with particular care, including an awareness of the Child's cultural identity and how that affects interpretation of their behaviour and language.
Reassure the Child	Let the Child know that they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are not in trouble. • Have done the right thing.
Ask open ended prompts – e.g. "What happened next?"	Do not interview the Child (in other words, do not ask questions beyond open prompts for the Child to continue). Do not make promises that cannot be kept, e.g., "I will keep you safe now".

If the Child is visibly distressed	Provide appropriate reassurance and re-engage in appropriate activities under supervision until they are able to participate in ordinary activities.
If the Child is not in immediate danger	Re-involve the Child in ordinary activities and explain what you are going to do next.
If the Child is in immediate danger	Contact the police immediately.
As soon as possible formally record the disclosure	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word for word, what the Child said. • The date, time and who was present.

6. Recording suspected child abuse

6.1 If reporting suspected child abuse to a University manager/supervisor/course coordinator/programme director (or equivalent), the person should:

- (a) Record in writing:
 - (i) Anything said by the Child;
 - (ii) The date, time, location of any relevant event or discussion and the names of any individuals that may be relevant; and
 - (iii) The factual concerns or observations that have led to the suspicion of abuse or neglect (e.g. any physical, behavioural or developmental concerns).
- (b) Make no decisions in isolation and do not act outside area of expertise.

6.2 The University manager/supervisor/course coordinator/programme director (or equivalent) should:

- (a) Immediately refer the matter to the Child Protection Coordinator, and
- (b) Record the action taken by the University and any other information that may be relevant.

Note: Relevant information can inform any future actions.

7. Notifying Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children of suspected child abuse

7.1 The Child Protection Coordinator should notify Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children promptly if there is a belief that a Child has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected.

7.2 A phone call is the preferred initial contact with Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children (see below) as this enables both parties to discuss the nature of the concerns and appropriate response options.

- (a) Phone: 0508 Family (0508 326 459);
- (b) Email: contact@ot.govt.nz

7.3 Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children:

- (a) will make the decision to inform the parents or caregivers, in consultation with the University;
- (b) will advise what, if any, immediate action may be appropriate, including referring the concern to the Police;
- (c) is responsible for looking into the situation to find out what may be happening.

8. Storing relevant information

8.1 Records of concerns that arise can assist in identifying patterns. Notification may be based on an accumulation of concerns rather than a specific incident. The University manager/supervisor/course coordinator/programme director (or equivalent) and the Child Protection Coordinator should securely store all relevant information in the work unit and, where appropriate, any earlier concerns. This information includes:

- (a) the record of the concern;
- (b) a record of any related discussions, including copies of correspondence, if any;
- (c) a record of any advice received (e.g. from Oranga Tamariki - Ministry for Children or the police); and
- (d) the action the University took, including any rationale for taking that action.

8.2 In some situations, the individual who reported the suspected child abuse, and their University manager/supervisor/course coordinator/programme director (or equivalent), may be kept informed about aspects of the situation.

9. Allegations against a Member of the University Community

9.1 Any allegation against a Member of the University Community will be handled in accordance with the University's internal statutes, policies, procedures, and any contractual or legal obligations.

10. Advice and Support Available

10.1 People who Members of the University Community (except for Students) may approach for advice and/or support include: their line manager; the Child Protection Coordinator; Human Resources; Manager, Staff Wellness; and EAP via Benestar.

10.2 People who Students may approach for advice and/or support include: their University supervisor/course coordinator/programme director (or equivalent); the Child Protection Coordinator; and the Student Interest and Conflict Resolution Team.

11. Definitions

11.1 The definitions set out in the Child Protection Policy apply to this Procedure.

Related Documents and Information

12. Related Documents

[Children's Act 2014](#)

[Children's \(Requirements for Safety Checks of Children's Workers\) Regulations 2015](#)

[Education and Training Act 2020](#)

[Education \(Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners\) Code of Practice 2021](#)

[Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 \(Children's and Young People's Well-being Act 1989\)](#)

[Victoria University of Wellington Act 1961](#)

[Child Protection Policy](#)

[Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Framework](#)

[Health, Safety and Wellbeing Statute](#)

[Te Tiriti o Waitangi Statute](#)

13. Document Management and Control*Essential Record*

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