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|  <p><b>Montessori STARS</b></p> | <h2>Policy</h2>  |
|  | <b>Policy Category: HEALTH &amp; SAFETY</b>                      |
|  | Date Created: December 2022                                      |
|  | <b>Policy Name: REG46/HS31</b><br><b>Child Protection Policy</b> |

### Policy Summary

This policy outlines Montessori STARS' commitment to child protection and prevention of child abuse and neglect. This policy states our procedures when child abuse is reported to us or suspected by us. All Kaiako, students, volunteers and whānau are expected to abide by this policy.

### Purpose Statement

The interest, safety, and well-being of tamariki are paramount, and all staff at Montessori STARS must ensure the well-being of tamariki in our care and community. We provide a safe environment free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse, and a culture where employees feel confident to raise issues of concern, keeping all children at Montessori STARS at the centre of all decision-making when responding to suspected abuse.

We support the roles of the New Zealand Police and Oranga Tamariki in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected/alleged abuse to these agencies.

*For this policy, abuse is used in the context of adult to child. This could be staff to a child or an adult (outside the centre) to the child. Abuse relating to child-to-child or child-to-adult is not within the scope of this policy.*

**TE WHĀRIKI Well-being/ Mana atua - Goal 3:** Tamariki experience an environment where they are kept safe from harm

### Policy Principles

- ☆ The interest, protection and priority of the child is paramount at all times.
- ☆ We recognise the rights of whānau to participate in decision-making about their child.
- ☆ We commit to ensuring that all staff can identify signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect and can take appropriate action in response.
- ☆ We will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.
- ☆ We are committed to promoting a culture where staff feel confident that they can constructively challenge poor practices or raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.

### Definitions From Child Matters website: [www.childmatters.org.nz](http://www.childmatters.org.nz)

**Child Abuse** is defined by the Ministry of Children, Oranga Tamariki as “any child or young person that has been, or is likely to be, harmed (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived”. **Child Abuse can be:**

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Verbal Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect.

**Child Neglect** - is a pattern of behaviour which occurs over a period of time and results in impaired functioning or development of a child. It is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs.

**Neglect may be:**

- Physical - failure to provide necessary basic needs of food, shelter or warmth
- Medical - failure to seek, obtain or follow through with medical care for the child
- Abandonment - leaving a child young person in any situation without arranging necessary care for them and with no intention of returning
- Neglectful supervision – failure to provide developmentally appropriate or legally required supervision
- Refusal to assume parental responsibility - unwillingness or inability to provide appropriate care for a child.”

## Identifying possible signs of abuse or neglect

The physical and behavioural signs, symptoms and history listed below, may indicate abuse or neglect. However, they are not specific to abuse or neglect. In certain situations, contexts and combinations they may indicate other conditions. All signs must be examined in the total context of the child or young person's situation.

| The Child - Consider physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect   |   |  |   |  |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| Recognise disclosure as a sign of abuse   |   |  |   |  |
| Recognise Physical Signs  | Record Parent, Caregiver or family signs  | Observe Behavioural Signs  | Child/family Vulnerabilities  | Identify Developmental Signs   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bruises and welts</li> <li>• Cuts and abrasions</li> <li>• Scalds and burns</li> <li>• Fractures</li> <li>• Head injuries</li> <li>• Sexually transmitted infections</li> <li>• Failure to thrive and malnutrition</li> <li>• Dehydration</li> <li>• Inadequate hygiene and clothing</li> <li>• Poisoning</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to family violence</li> <li>• Unrealistic expectations</li> <li>• Terrorising</li> <li>• Corrupting</li> <li>• Isolating</li> <li>• Humiliating</li> <li>• Dependency</li> <li>• Closure</li> <li>• Flight</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggression</li> <li>• Withdrawal</li> <li>• Anxiety, fear and regression</li> <li>• Sadness</li> <li>• Overly responsible</li> <li>• Obsessions</li> <li>• Substance abuse</li> <li>• Suicidal thoughts/ plans</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addictions</li> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• ORANGA TAMARIKI history</li> <li>• Age of parents or child</li> <li>• Attachment</li> <li>• Disability</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global development delay.</li> <li>• Specific delays:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Motor</li> <li>○ Attachment</li> <li>○ Speech and language</li> <li>○ Social cognitive</li> <li>○ Vision and hearing</li> <li>○ Unusual develop-mental patterns</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

For further information on identifying child abuse and neglect see <https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/worried-about-a-child-tell-us/identify-abuse/>

## Procedure for responding to suspected abuse or neglect

**Any person can report suspected abuse to Oranga Tamariki or the Police and will not be prevented from doing so, the Service Provider (Sharon Anderson) will be consulted as appropriate.**

**The following measures will be taken by all kaiako regarding suspected abuse:**

- ✧ All allegations of child abuse will be taken seriously.
- ✧ If any team member sees a tamaiti being abused, observes signs of abuse, or tamaiti reports being abused, we will follow the reporting process for child abuse, as detailed below
- ✧ If a child makes a verbal disclosure of abuse to a team member, that staff member will have a conversation with the child to reassure the child, and they will tell the child that they believe them. Team members can use open-ended prompts, such as 'tell me more' to gather information, but will not interview the child, ask leading questions, put words into their mouths or ask them to give more information than they are willing to share.
- ✧ Disclosures can also come in the form of behaviour, or through comments from other tamariki and adults, and in these cases, written observations will be documented and discussed with Sharon Anderson, Owner/Director.
- ✧ Written documentation is kept on any issue or incident of concern in the child's private notes section on Educa. Kaiako must document their concerns confidentially and inform the team.
- ✧ **Any person can report suspected abuse to Oranga Tamariki or the Police and will not be prevented from doing so.** Sharon Anderson will be consulted as appropriate.
- ✧ All suspicions or observed incidents, or reports of incidents, should be reported directly to Sharon Anderson as soon as possible. Sharon Anderson will immediately take steps to protect the child and

record the report. If Sharon Anderson feels there is reasonable cause to believe a tamaiti is unsafe, she will report it to Oranga Tamariki) - 0508 FAMILY (0508 326 459).

- ✧ If there is no short-term risk, time can be taken to consult cohesively with all kaiako thoroughly to make a well-informed decision. This decision-making will be a priority above other mahi.
- ✧ If kaiako feels they cannot go to Sharon Anderson (for example they have concerns about Sharon's practice or wish to make an allegation involving Sharon), they will report directly to Laura Newell.
- ✧ If kaiako has told Sharon Anderson about their concerns for the wellbeing of a child but does not feel that Sharon has taken appropriate action, they will inform Laura Newell.
- ✧ To protect the privacy and dignity of the tamaiti and whānau, information will be kept confidential.

### **Allegations or concerns about staff/students/volunteers**

When a kaiako/student/volunteer is suspected, the same process will apply.

If there are any allegations of abuse or ill-treatment of a tamaiti by a Montessori STARS employee, the authorities will be informed immediately. The suspected employee will be suspended while the matter is investigated. Procedures to follow will align with the individual's employment agreement. Montessori STARS will make a mandatory report to the Teaching Council if required. Montessori STARS will offer support to all those involved in any abuse allegations.

### **Confidentiality and Information sharing**

- ✧ Kaiako must Maintain confidentiality at all times. Failure to comply with this policy will be regarded as serious misconduct and processed accordingly
- ✧ The Privacy Act, of 2020 and the Oranga Tamariki Act, of 1989 allow information to be shared to keep tamariki safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated. Any person disclosing information in good faith regarding suspected abuse will be assured the protection afforded by law that no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.
- ✧ The Privacy Act, 2020 allows professionals to share information about tamariki and young people with other professionals when they have a serious concern for their wellbeing. Sharing information must contribute to the prevention or reduction of harm or contribute to an assessment of risks and needs for the tamaiti.
- ✧ All information will be kept confidential with the parties concerned and concern records kept secure.
- ✧ If considered safe to do so (unless it increases the risk to the tamaiti, or places team members in a dangerous situation) then parents will be informed if Montessori STARS is making a report of concern. This is not to gain consent if a report is being made as legislation allows Montessori STARS to share information without the consent of whānau. If parents object, facts will be recorded along with reasons for decisions made.
- ✧ There may be cases where the involvement of statutory agencies is inappropriate and potentially harmful to families. If Sharon Anderson feels there is reasonable concern for the wellbeing of a tamaiti, they will work to respond to the needs of this tamaiti in a manner proportionate to the level of need and risk, working with external agencies and whānau as appropriate. Regulated child welfare and protection agencies are listed in the Oranga Tamariki Act and include all health services.

### **Employment and Safety Checking**

Following the Children's (Requirements for Safety Checks of Children's Core Workers) Regulations 2015.

- ✧ Safety checking will be carried out following the Vulnerable Children Act 2014. This process includes Identity verification, a police vet, a sighting of qualifications (if applicable), work history, an interview

and referee checks. Montessori STARS will undertake a risk assessment and if there is any suspicion that an applicant might pose a risk to tamariki, that applicant will not be employed.

- ✧ Montessori STARS review all safety checking information for current employees every three years.
- ✧ Management will get an external agency to carry out their Safety Checks

### **Training**

- ✧ Ongoing training and professional development will support the implementation of this policy.
- ✧ Kaiako, student and volunteer induction training will include this policy.
- ✧ Our Child Protection Policy and relevant resources will be made available for tamariki, parents, whānau and kaiako. A copy of our Child Protection Policy is accessible on our website and Educa.
- ✧ All Management and permanent kaiako have completed the required Child Protection Webinar from the Ministry of Education and copies of completion are in the foyer.

### **General Child Protection Procedures:**

- ✧ Montessori STARS are committed to maintaining and increasing parental awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse
- ✧ Montessori STARS will give no persons, other than employed kaiako over the age of 17 years, tasks that involve nappy changing, toileting or responsibility for the supervision of tamariki
- ✧ Montessori STARS will ensure that any visitors or volunteers working in the centre are well supported and visible in the activities they perform with tamariki
- ✧ Kaiako will respond appropriately to a child who initiates physical contact in seeking affection, reassurance or comfort. It is not appropriate to force any form of unwanted affection/touching on a child. Touching should not be initiated to gratify adult needs. Physical contact during the changing or cleansing of tamariki must be for that task only and not be more than is necessary for the job
- ✧ Montessori STARS ensure no child is taken from the centre by any staff member or adult, without the permission of a parent, except in the case of an emergency where clearance has been obtained from Sharon Anderson, Owner/Director
- ✧ Montessori STARS will maintain appropriate records and always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities
- ✧ Montessori STARS are committed to promoting a culture where all kaiako feel confident that they can raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.

### **Relationships with Parents**

- ✧ Kaiako will form reciprocal relationships with parents and be aware of issues that make life extra hard for parents
- ✧ Kaiako will monitor situations and offer help and support to parents/families/whānau to protect their tamariki where we can
- ✧ Montessori STARS recognise the rights of family/whānau to participate in the decision-making about their tamariki
- ✧ Montessori STARS is committed to working with other agencies where necessary to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and families/whānau

### Relevant Background (including legislation/regulation references)

**HS31: There is a written child protection policy that meets the requirements of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.** The policy contains provisions for the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect, information about how the service will keep children safe from abuse and neglect, and how it will respond to suspected child abuse and neglect. The policy must be reviewed every three years.

**HS32: All practicable steps are taken to protect children from exposure to inappropriate material (for example, of an explicitly sexual or violent nature).**

**HS33:** No person on the premises uses, or is under the influence of, alcohol or any other substance that has a detrimental effect on their functioning or behaviour during the service's hours of operation.  
Governance, Management and Administration: Professional Practices

**GMA7A:** All children's workers who have access to children are safety-checked following the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.

Safety checks must be undertaken and the results obtained before the worker has access to children. The results of the safety checks must be recorded and the record kept as long as the person is employed at Montessori STARS.

Every children's worker must be safety checked every three years. Safety checks may be carried out by the employer or another person acting on their behalf.

### National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP)

**Objective 1:** Learners at the Centre – Learners with their whānau are at the centre of education

**Action 1:** Ensure places of learning are safe, inclusive and free from racism, discrimination and bullying

### Implications and Risks for the Centre

Failure to protect tamariki will not only lead to lifelong damage for tamariki, it will also seriously damage the reputation of Montessori STARS, our Kaiako and the reputation of all Early Childhood Centres around NZ.

### Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or when there is a significant change in the area of the policy topic.

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| <b>Authorised:</b>              | Sharon Anderson                   |
| <b>Date Reviewed:</b>           | April 2024                        |
| <b>Next Review:</b>             | April 2027                        |
| <b>Consultation Undertaken:</b> | Staff meetings, Educa for Parents |