

2 POLICY: PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Aim

To ensure the prevention of child abuse and neglect and the protection of children at all times. Reg 28 (7)

Definitions

Child Abuse is defined in the Children Young Persons and their Families Act as “the harming (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person.”

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.”

2.1 Position Statement

- 2.1.1 Montessori Children's House Wanaka is committed to the protection of children and to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. This commitment means that the interests and welfare of the child are paramount when any decision is made about suspected abuse.
- 2.1.2 Montessori Children's House Wanaka supports the roles of the Police and Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected abuse to these agencies.
- 2.1.3 Montessori Children's House Wanaka is committed to ensuring that all parties involved in any child abuse case receive support from appropriate professionals or agencies.
- 2.1.4 Montessori Children's House Wanaka encourages staff and parents to be aware of how to prevent, recognise and respond to suspected abuse.
- 2.1.5 The children at Montessori Children's House Wanaka will be in an environment where they will feel safe, secure, have their health nurtured and be protected from harm.

2.2 Staff Training

- 2.2.1 Montessori Children's House Wanaka is committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to suspected abuse or neglect.
- 2.2.2 Immediately notify the Managing Teacher if staff observe signs of child abuse or anyone reports to them any suspicions of child abuse of children at the centre, or a

pattern of neglect or concerns is identified. Maintain confidentiality. Failure of staff to comply with this policy will be regarded as serious misconduct.

- 2.2.3 Never take a child from the centre without the permission of a parent, except in the case of an emergency where clearance has been obtained from either the Managing Teacher.
- 2.2.4 As part of their induction, new staff will familiarise themselves with the centre's policies on child abuse and will be required to read the Child Youth and Family publication "An Interagency Guide to Breaking the Cycle – Let's Stop Child Abuse Together", in particular pages 29, 30 and 31.

2.3 Parent Resources

- 2.3.1 Parents are welcome to visit and observe their children but need to pre-arrange a time with the centre to ensure there are not too many parents observing at the one time.
- 2.3.2 Parents are encouraged to be familiar with Montessori Children's House Wanaka's prevention of child abuse and neglect policy.
- 2.3.3 Information regarding agencies involved in dealing with child abuse or publications may be obtained from staff.
- 2.3.4 Parent workshops may be offered from time to time regarding topics such as positive guidance or positive parenting.
- 2.3.5 Parents are encouraged to discuss any concerns regarding child abuse with the Managing Teacher.
- 2.3.6 Any complaint should be made following the complaints procedure on the school notice board. (*Ref Communication & Consultation section*)

2.4 Safeguards for Montessori Children's House Wanaka Staff

- 2.4.1 Employment of Staff (*Ref Employment Policy*)
- 2.4.2 All applicants for permanent positions undergo a planned interview.
- 2.4.3 Referees and job history are checked (temporary and permanent staff).
- 2.4.4 A police vet is carried out for all core and non-core workers, (temporary and permanent staff).

2.5 Supervision

- 2.5.1 Staff should be, as often as possible, in visual contact with children and other members of staff (*Ref: Procedure for supervision of children*).
- 2.5.2 Children may only leave the centre with a parents/guardians permission and procedures are in place to ensure children's safety on excursions.
- 2.5.3 Staff may touch children in a manner that is appropriate for the situation and that does not threaten, hurt, or make the child feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

- 2.5.4 Toileting and nappy changing is only performed by a member of staff who is known to the child.

2.6 Professionalism

- 2.6.1 Any information about children, parents or any other person gained while working at Montessori Children's House Wanaka must remain confidential and should only be discussed with other Montessori Children's House Wanaka staff or trustees or caregivers or other professional agencies on a need to know basis.
- 2.6.2 Staff will at all times provide a good role model for the children in terms of showing consideration, respect, sensitivity, understanding and listening.

2.7 Responding to Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect - Record Keeping

- 2.7.1 Montessori Children's House Wanaka will respond to suspected child abuse or neglect by writing down all observations, impressions and communications that may cause concern. The Managing Teacher will be responsible for overseeing this.

2.7.2 Mechanism for reporting (in centre)

- 2.7.2.1 A staff member can act alone regarding suspected child abuse or neglect and may report suspected cases of abuse or neglect directly to CYFS or the Police. However, staff are encouraged to consult with the Managing Teacher before a report is made.
- 2.7.2.2 If agreed, the Managing Teacher will take any necessary action and arrange for consultations with the appropriate agencies (as below).

2.7.3 Mechanism for Reporting (outside centre)

- 2.7.3.1 If the Managing Teacher has cause to suspect that child abuse has occurred and a child is unsafe, the Managing Teacher will report the matter to the Police or CYFS.
- 2.7.3.2 If the Managing Teacher believes ongoing neglect is occurring she will consult with the Public Health Nurse, Plunket or CYFS.

2.8 Confidentiality

- 2.8.1 All documentation is to be kept in a confidential file under lock and key.
- 2.8.2 Any discussion Montessori staff or trustees have regarding suspected child abuse will remain confidential to the parties involved in the discussion, unless disclosure is required to the police or CYFS.

2.9 Appropriate Informing of Parents

- 2.9.1 If it is believed that the suspected child abuse occurred outside the child's family, by a person not well known to the family, parents will be informed and consulted. While it is considered good practice to consult with the child's family, Montessori Children's House Wanaka reserves the right to make an independent decision with regard to consulting or reporting to CYFS or the police. The Managing Teacher may call upon the support of any of the following to help convey the necessary information to parents: The Public Health Nurse, Plunket or a Doctor.

- 2.9.2 If it is believed that the abuse may have been perpetuated by a family member (or someone close to the family) then the family will not initially be informed of any decision to report or consult. The matter will be reported to the Police or CYFS.

3 Allegations against a staff member

- 3.1 If it is believed that child abuse has been perpetuated by an employee or other person assisting at the centre, staff should report the matter promptly to the Managing Teacher who must inform the Board of Trustees.
- 3.2 University of Otago College of Education, MOE or CYFS may be consulted for advice.
- 3.3 Staff members under suspicion may be suspended while the matter is investigated and they will be fully informed of their rights.

3.1 Support

- 3.1.1 Children, families, staff and others involved in the investigation of suspected child abuse should have support and MCHW will assist in ensuring that individuals are referred to relevant professionals or specialist organizations.