**Child Protection Policy**

**Rationale**

To meet provisions of the Children’s Act (2014), the Education and Training Act (2020), the Education (Early Childhood Education) Regulations 2008, and the Early Childhood Education Licensing Criteria with regards to tamariki protection.

**Objective**

The objectives of this policy are to:

* detail the definition of neglect and abuse of a child to establish a common understanding for everyone associated with Country Kidz
* detail how Country Kidz management and kaiako will ensure tamariki are appropriately protected from neglect, abuse, and harm
* demonstrate our commitment to training and support of kaiako in this context
* describe how Country Kidz will respond to suspected child abuse and neglect

Country Kidz is legally obliged to ensure the wellbeing of tamariki in our care and are committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of all tamariki. The safety and wellbeing of tamariki is our top priority. We support whānau to protect their tamariki and provide a safe environment, free from physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual abuse. Country Kidz is committed to work with other agencies where necessary to respond to the needs of vulnerable tamariki and whānau.

**Policy**

Child abuse and neglect is not acceptable and tamariki need our protection, where prevention is our foremost action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our tamariki. Country Kidz and early education services have a key role to play in providing a safe environment for tamariki, free from physical, emotional, verbal, and/or sexual abuse while also supporting whānau to protect their tamariki. For the purpose of this policy, abuse is used in the context of adult to child. This could be kaiako to child or an adult (outside of Country Kidz) to the child. Abuse relating to child-to-child or child-to-adult is not within the scope of this policy and is afforded in our Country Kidz Positive Guidance Policy.

If we believe a child is in immediate danger, Country Kidz will phone New Zealand Police on 111. If we are concerned about the wellbeing of a child, or want to discuss, report, or refer a concern, Country Kidz will contact Oranga Tamariki. If whānau have concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a child they can approach one of our staff. Discussions of such matters will take place to ensure the privacy of all are maintained.

We recognise the rights of family/whānau to participate in the decision-making about their tamariki. We recognise tamariki rights to make decisions about themselves and have agency. In order for children to be safe from abuse and or neglect, both whānau and kaiako need a shared understanding of what abuse and neglect is, how it can present, and how it can be prevented. This shared understanding and commitment is shared with parents and whānau through policy reviews and our enrolment of tamariki.

Country Kidz uses the following definitions for child abuse and neglect *(sourced from Child Matters*):

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| ***Child Abuse*** is defined by 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 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.”
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The interest and protection of tamariki is paramount in all actions. Country Kidz strategies emphasise prevention of child neglect and abuse and support for whānau, where prevention is the best outcome. We have a commitment to ensure that all staff can identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect and are empowered to take appropriate action in response.

We are committed to supporting all Country Kidz staff to work in accordance with this policy, to work with partner agencies and organisations to ensure tamariki protection policies are consistent and of high quality. This ensures we are complying with relevant legislative responsibilities with regards to child protection. Kaiako are committed to share information in a timely way and to discuss any concerns about individual tamariki with colleagues or the Centre Manager. We are committed to a culture where kaiako feel confident they can raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal.

We conduct safety checks of all staff in accordance with Ministry of Education, Licensing Criteria (GMA7A) and Children’s Act 2014 requirements (as per Country Kidz Safety Check Procedure). We make sure all kaiako know and understand what abuse and neglect are, and how to recognise indicators (see Appendix 1). We make sure that all kaiako know and understand that corporal punishment and seclusion of tamariki are strictly prohibited at Country Kidz, in line with Section 24 of the Education and Training Act 2020. We encourage our staff to talk to someone experienced, for a different point of view, or for ideas about how to support whānau. We also have these contacts readily displayed on our noticeboard should whānau wish to seek additional support from our wider community:

* Parent Help – 0800 568 856
* Oranga Tamariki – 0508 326 459
* Are You OK – 0800 456 450 (Family Violence Information Line)
* PlunketLine on 0800 933 922.

We will form good relationships with parents and be aware of issues that make life extra hard for parents (see Appendix 2). We will monitor situations and offer help and support to whānau where we can.

Country Kidz management will:

* Always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of tamariki. If a child’s safety is in danger, the police will be called.
* Maintain confidentiality and failure of Country Kidz staff to comply with this provision will be regarded as serious misconduct.
* Maintain and increase kaiako and whānau awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse, including learning about appropriate touching.
* Carry out staff safety checking (including Police Vetting) in accordance with the Children’s (Requirements for Safety Checks of Children’s Workers) Regulations 2015 and that this is completed prior to any staff member starting work with tamariki at Country Kidz
* A supervision plan is in place at Country Kidz and unauthorised persons are never left unsupervised with tamariki. Kaiako and other adults visiting or working at Country Kidz are well supported and visible in the activities they perform with tamariki through thorough and meaningful supervision and observation. Country Kidz respects the privacy of our tamariki, kaiako, and visitors, however, visibility will be given priority to ensure the safety of all concerned.
* As per our Country Kidz Nappy Change policy, tasks involving nappy changing, toileting or responsibility is only permitted to be undertaken by permanent Country Kidz kaiako.
* Understanding safe practice: responding 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 the purpose of that task only and not be more than is necessary for the job.
* No tamariki are able to be taken from Country Kidz by any staff member or adult, without the express written permission of a parent, except in the case of an emergency
* Our Country Kidz policies and procedures protect kaiako from unjustified allegations of abuse
* Country Kidz has educational and informational resources for children and adults on child abuse
* Should a neglect or abuse situation occur or come to the attention of Country Kidz, and should a report/referral to Oranga Tamariki or the Police be made, Country Kidz is also under an obligation to report the matter to the Ministry of Education.

Country Kidz kaiako will:

* Always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of tamariki. If a child is in danger, the police will be called
* Familiarise themselves with this and all Country Kidz policies and procedures
* Immediately notify the Centre Manager if they observe signs of child abuse or anyone reports to them any suspicions of child abuse of tamariki at Country Kidz, or a pattern of neglect or concern is identified
* Maintain confidentiality - failure of kaiako to comply with this policy will be regarded as serious misconduct
* Understanding safe practice: responding 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 the purpose of that task only and not be more than is necessary for the job.
* Not take a child from Country Kidz without the express written permission of a parent, except in the case of an emergency

**Preventing Contact, Identifying, and Responding to suspected abuse**

**Preventing Contact**

If you suspect someone of child abuse, you must prevent them from encountering any children at Country Kidz. You may need to exclude them from your premises ([Regulation 56(external link)](http://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2008/0204/latest/DLM1412631.html?search=sw_096be8ed819f1c5c_regulation+56_25_se&p=4&sr=78)).

People who are unwell could be unwell physically or mentally. If you suspect someone of being physically or mentally unwell in a way that could pose a risk to tamariki, we will prevent them from coming into contact with any tamariki at Country Kidz, which may involve excluding them from your premises ([Regulation 57(external link)](http://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2008/0204/latest/DLM1412632.html?search=sw_096be8ed819f1c5c_regulation+57_25_se&p=4&sr=79)):

**Physical or mental unwellness includes:**

* any physical or mental condition that could be dangerous (for example, strange or disturbing behaviour, aggression)
* any infectious or contagious disease or condition (for example, the flu or COVID-19)

**Alcohol / Drugs:**

No adults associated with Country Kidz community are able to abuse or are under the influence of alcohol or any other substance that has a detrimental effect on their behaviour or ability to function during operational hours (including drop-offs and pick-ups). It applies to any adult in our learning community.

**Responding**

The services available in each community will vary and may include a range of government and non-government providers who will be able to help the child and their family/whānau. For example, Strengthening Families, Whānau Ora, Iwi Social Services, Social Workers in Schools, Children’s Teams, family/whānau counselling agencies, budget services and mental health and drug and alcohol services. In general, with regards to responding to abuse and/or neglect:

* Anyone can report child abuse
* If a child is in danger, call 111
* Responding to more general concerns about the wellbeing of a child, where referral to the statutory agencies (Oranga Tamariki or the Police) is not appropriate – e.g., referral to a family/whānau support agency in the community, such as Social Workers in Schools, Strengthening Families or Whānau Ora is more appropriate.
* Responding to a child when the child discloses abuse or when there are concerns about abuse or neglect – a phone call to Oranga Tamariki to discuss appropriate next steps:

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| 1. 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. |
| 1. Reassure the child
 | Let the child know that they: • Are not in trouble. • Have done the right thing. |
| 1. 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 can’t be kept, e.g., “I will keep you safe now”. |
| 1. 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. |
| 1. If the child is not in immediate danger
 | Re-involve the child in ordinary activities and explain what you are going to do next. |
| 1. If the child is in immediate danger
 | Contact the Police immediately |
| 1. As soon as possible formally record the disclosure
 | Record: • Word for word, what the child said. • The date, time and who was present. |

* Responding to other concerns

Where a concern about a child doesn’t amount to suspicion of abuse or neglect, it could be harmful to the wellbeing of the child and their whānau to make a notification to the statutory agencies. Instead, organisations should work to partner with social service providers in their communities to identify and address the needs of the child.

**Confidentiality and information sharing**

The Privacy Act 2020 and the Children’s Act 2014 allow information to be shared to keep tamariki safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated. Under the Children’s Act, any person who believes that a child has been, or is likely to be, harmed physically, emotionally or sexually or ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived may report the matter to Oranga Tamariki or the Police and, provided that the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal, or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

It is recommended that all instances of suspected abuse be reported to Oranga Tamariki. If kaiako are in doubt, the decision to report will be referred to the Centre Manager for a final decision. In making this decision to report or not, kaiako will need to be able to show that the decision they made was a reasonable one based on the information they have or should have asked for (including physical, behavioural, and anecdotal). In addition, putting aside potential bias, kaiako must consider whether a reasonable person in their position would have come to a different view and suspected potential child abuse. Failure to exercise a decision to these criteria places tamariki wellbeing at risk.

Information, discussion, trusting relationships, and clear procedures will strengthen the ability of kaiako, whanau, and tamariki to work together to adequately protect all tamariki who attend Country Kidz. Information provided through induction ensures all kaiako and support staff of Country Kidz are well trained with regards to their legislative and regulatory requirements. Failure to protect tamariki will not only lead to lifelong damage for tamariki, it will also seriously damage the reputation of Country Kidz, its kaiako, and the reputation of early childhood education centres.

*Aligns with:*

*Licensing criteria for centre-based ECE services 2021 (HS31)*

*Education and Training Act (2020)*

*Education (Early Childhood Education) Regulations 2008*

*Children’s Act 2014*

*Country Kidz Health and Safety Policies [general]*

*Country Kidz Accident and Illness Policy*

*Country Kidz Cyber Safety and Inappropriate Material Policy*

*Country Kidz Positive Guidance Policy*

*Country Kidz Alcohol and Drug Statement*

*Country Kidz Human Resources Policies [general]*

*References:*

Child Matters (n.d.). *What is Child Abuse.* Retrieved from

<https://www.childmatters.org.nz/insights/what-is-child-abuse/what-is-child-abuse/>

**Review**

Review when there is a significant change to legislature or as part of the annual management plan.

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| **Authorised:** |  |
| **Date:** | March 2022 |
| **Next Review:** | Add to Annual Management Plan for February, 2023 not withstanding a change in legislation or criteria |

Appendix 1

**Indicators of Abuse and 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.

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| **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** |
| * Bruises and welts
* Cuts and abrasions
* Scalds and burns
* Fractures
* Head injuries
* Sexually transmitted infections
* Failure to thrive and malnutrition
* Dehydration
* Inadequate hygiene and clothing
* Poisoning
 | * Exposure to family violence
* Unrealistic expectations
* Terrorising
* Corrupting
* Isolating
* Humiliating
* Dependency
* Closure
* Flight
 | * Aggression
* Withdrawal
* Anxiety, fear, and regression
* Sadness
* Overly responsible
* Obsessions
* Substance abuse
* Suicidal thoughts/ plans
 | * Addictions
* Mental health
* ORANGA TAMARIKI history
* Age of parents or child
* Attachment
* Disability
 | * Global development delay.
* Specific delays:
	+ Motor
	+ Attachment
	+ Speech and language
	+ Social cognitive
	+ Vision and hearing
	+ Unusual develop-mental patterns
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Appendix 2

**Risk Factors of Child Abuse**

Issues in the home that teachers or centre staff might become aware of, that might lead to abuse and neglect include:

* Parents with money problems, being out of work
* Overcrowding or housing struggles
* Parents with stress
* Child with special needs
* Parents isolated from friends, family and whānau
* Parents with a history of depression or other mental illness
* Parents separating.

Early signs that can lead to abuse and or neglect can be:

* Parent has a drug, alcohol or gambling problem
* Parent does not engage with their child or has a difficult relationship with them
* Child doesn’t have enough clothes on and is often cold and hungry
* Child has unexplained or changeable emotions (eg, withdrawn or depressed)
* Parents frequently yell at, swear at or shame a child
* Child seems scared of a particular adult.

#### Parental Factors:

* Parent has already abused a child
* Pregnancy was not wanted
* Parent has a background of abuse when growing up
* Young, unsupported mother often with low education
* Parents have unrealistic expectations of the child and lack parenting knowledge
* Parent is isolated and has few supports
* Parent has a mental illness or is abusing drugs or alcohol

#### Environmental Factors:

* Overcrowding in the house
* Poverty or lack of opportunity to improve the family’s resources
* Family violence is present
* A non-biological adult living in the house
* Family is experiencing multiple stresses

#### Child Factors:

* Baby is sickly, colicky, or unwanted
* Child has a physical or developmental disability
* Child is the product of an abusive relationship
* Lack of attachment between child and parent