



Nature Alliance Family Day Care Service

Child Protection



POLICIES IN THIS SECTION AS REQUIRED BY:

Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012: S162(A)

Education and Care Services National Regulations, 2012 – ‘Regulations’:76; 84; 84A; 147,153-155,165-168; 169 (2)(e)(f)(g), 170; 174-176

National Quality Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care (2010) Standard 2.1;2.2; 5.1; 5.2; 7.1.2.

Purpose:

All Family Day Care (FDC) Educators, Educator Assistants, coordinators and staff are committed to identifying possible risk and significant risk of harm to children and young people at FDC residences and/or approved venues. We comprehend our duty of care responsibilities to protect children from all types of abuse and neglect and will adhere to our moral and legislative obligations at all times.

We aim to implement effective strategies to assist in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children. Our FDC Service will act in the best interest of each child, assisting them to develop to their full potential.

Scope

This policy applies to the approved provider, nominated supervisor, coordinator, Educators, Educator assistants, children, families, volunteers and visitors (including contractors) of the Family Day Care Service.

Policy:

Nature Alliance Family Day Care Service strongly opposes any type of abuse against a child and endorses high quality practices in relation to protecting children. FDC Educators have an important role to support children and young people and to identify concerns that may jeopardise their safety, welfare, or wellbeing. Nature Alliance FDC endeavours to embed the National Principals for Child Safe Organisations.

All Family Day Care Educators, Educator Assistants and Family Day Care Service staff who work with children are aware of the current Child Protection Law in WA and understand their obligations under that Law.

Definitions of Abuse:

Child abuse is any action towards a child or young person that harms or puts at risk their physical, psychological or emotional health or development. Child abuse can be a single incident or can be a number of different incidents that take place over time.

There are different forms of child abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, psychological abuse and child neglect.

Indicators Of Abuse:

There are common physical and behavioural signs that may indicate abuse or neglect. The presence of one of these signs does not necessarily mean abuse or neglect. Behavioural or physical signs which assist in recognising harm to children are known as indicators. *The following is a guide only.* One indicator on its own may not imply abuse or neglect. However, a single indicator can be as important as the presence of several indicators. Each indicator

needs to be deliberated in the perspective of other indicators and the child's circumstances. A child's behaviour is likely to be affected if he/she is under stress. There can be many causes of stress and it is important to find out specifically what is causing the stress. Abuse and neglect can be single incidents or ongoing and may be intentional or unintentional.

General indicators of abuse and neglect may include:

- marked delay between injury and seeking medical assistance
- history of injury
- the child gives some indication that the injury did not occur as stated
- the child tells you someone has hurt him/her
- the child tells you about someone he/she knows who has been hurt
- someone (relative, friend, acquaintance, and sibling) tells you that the child may have been abused.

Physical Abuse:

Physical abuse occurs when a child is severely and/or persistently hurt or injured by an adult or a child's caregiver. It may also be the result of putting a child at risk of being injured.

Some examples are:

- hitting, shaking, punching
- burning and scolding
- excessive physical punishment or discipline
- attempted suffocation
- shaking a baby.

Possible signs of Physical Abuse

- broken bones or unexplained bruises, burns, welts
- the child is unable to explain an injury, or the explanation is vague
- dehydration or poisoning
- the child is unusually frightened of a parent or caregiver
- arms and legs are covered by clothing in warm weather
- when parents delay getting medical assistance for their child's injury
- brain damage through shaking or hitting.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is exposed to, or involved in, sexual activity that is inappropriate to the child's age and developmental level. It includes circumstances where the child has less power than another person involved, is exploited or where the child has been bribed, threatened, or coerced. It also includes situations where there is a significant difference between the developmental or maturity level of the child and another person involved.

Some examples are:

- letting a child watch or read pornography
- allowing a child to watch sexual acts
- fondling the child's genitals
- having oral sex with a child
- vaginal or anal penetration
- using the internet to find a child for sexual exploitation.

Possible signs of sexual abuse when a child:

- acts in a sexualised way that is inappropriate to his/her age
- creates stories, poems or artwork about abuse
- has pain, bleeding or swelling in his/her genital area
- starts doing things they have grown out of such as crying a lot, bed wetting or soiling, clinging to caregiver
- has nightmares or sudden unexplained fears.

Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse occurs when an adult harms a child's development by repeatedly treating and speaking to a child in ways that damage the child's ability to feel and express their feelings. Some examples are:

- constantly putting a child down
- humiliating or shaming a child
- not showing love, support or guidance
- continually ignoring or rejecting the child
- exposing the child to family and domestic violence
- threatening abuse or bullying a child
- threats to harm loved ones, property or pets.

Possible signs of emotional abuse include when a child:

- is very shy, fearful or afraid of doing something wrong
- displays extremes of behaviour for example from being very aggressive to very passive
- is not able to feel joy or happiness
- is often anxious or distressed
- feels worthless about life and themselves
- has delayed emotional development.

Psychological Abuse:

Psychological abuse is repeatedly treating and speaking to a child in ways that damage the child's perceptions, memory, self-esteem, moral development and intelligence. Some examples are:

- constantly belittling, shaming and humiliating a child
- calling the child names to minimise their self-worth
- threatening a child
- keeping a child isolated from other people or friends
- constantly ignoring a child
- encouraging a child to act inappropriately.

Possible signs of psychological abuse include when a child:

- feels worthless, unloved, unwanted
- feels dumb
- has difficulties remembering or recognising information
- has difficulties paying attention
- has difficulty knowing what actions are right or wrong
- is highly anxious.

Neglect:

Neglect is when children do not receive adequate food or shelter, medical treatment, supervision, care or nurturance to such an extent that their development is damaged, or they are injured. Neglect may be acute, episodic or chronic. Some examples are:

- leaving a child alone without appropriate supervision
- not ensuring the child attends school, or not enrolling the child at school
- infection because of poor hygiene or lack of medication
- not giving a child affection or emotional support
- not getting medical help when required.

Signs of neglect in children include:

1. untreated sores, severe nappy rash
2. bad body odour, matted hair, dirty skin
3. being involved in serious accidents

4. being hungry and stealing food
5. often being tired, late for school or not attending school
6. feeling bad about themselves
7. when a baby does not meet physical and development milestones without there being underlying medical reasons.

Mandatory Reporting

As from the 1st of November 2024, early childhood workers were legislated Mandatory Reporters. As a Mandatory Reporter you form a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child has been sexually abused, or is the subject of ongoing sexual abuse, you must make a report to the Department of Communities AND complete the Mandatory Reporting online form. mandatoryreportingweb.communities.wa.gov.au.

Procedures:

1. All Nature Alliance Staff, Educators, Educator Assistants, residents over 18 who reside at the Educators premises, volunteers and regular visitors to the Educator's premises must hold a current National Police Clearance (not more than 6 months old at time of application) and a current Working with Children Card. Nature Alliance will register and validate all WWCC's in line with the service Fit & Proper requirements. Both clearances must be updated every three years.
2. Child Protection training must be completed prior to the Educator commencing their business or before the engagement of an Educator Assistant and be updated every three years to remain current.
3. Mandatory Reporting training must be completed prior to the Educator commencing their business or before the engagement of an Educator Assistant and be updated every twelve months to remain current.

Documenting A Disclosure:

Nature Alliance FDC is committed to providing support to children, families, FDC Educators or staff who have made a report regarding child protection, with a focus on upholding strict confidentiality throughout the process. Our primary concern is the well-being and safety of the child, and we will work closely with relevant authorities, professionals, and support networks to ensure that the child's best interests are met throughout the process. Our dedicated support system will assist FDC Educators and staff in navigating this challenging process while safeguarding their privacy and professional well-being.

A disclosure of harm emerges when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened or is likely to happen. When a child discloses that he or she has been abused, it is an opportunity for an adult to provide immediate support and comfort and to assist in protecting the child from the abuse. It is also a chance to help the child connect to professional services that can keep them safe, provide support and facilitate their recovery from trauma. Disclosure is about seeking support and your response can have a great impact on the child or young person's ability to seek further help and recover from the trauma.

Disclosure or Suspicion that a Child in Care is Suffering Abuse by Someone Outside the Educator's Home

The Educator/Educator Assistant will:

1. Contact the police on 000 if they believe that the child is in immediate danger.
2. Give the child or young person their full attention and reassure the child or young person it is right to tell.

3. Not make promises that can't be kept and be honest about what you need to do next.
4. Not discuss the situation with the alleged perpetrator or any other person outside the reporting structure.
5. Report the information to the nominated supervisor or may report directly to the Department for Child Protection and advise the nominated supervisor immediately after.
6. Document the disclosure or suspicion accurately and objectively. This may include recording the conversation or taking visual images of the child in question, but these will not be used to investigate the suspicion themselves. All images and recordings will be securely stored on the Educators device and all online storage accounts will be secured. The privacy of the child is paramount, and any misuse of images or information could result in legal action being taken.
7. Complete an NA-FRM-002 Incident Report, but parent/guardian signature will not be required to protect the child. Forward this document, plus the documentation of the disclosure as an attachment, if necessary, to the Service as soon as possible but within 24 hours.
8. Document any informal discussion that contribute to the Department for Child Protection's investigation, as family or other reports may have been received by the Department and the current concerns need to be documented to add to their evidence. Forward these to direct to the DCP case worker if one has been appointed and the Service.

The Service will:

1. Ensure that the Nature Alliance FDC reporting procedures (NA- IFRM-0019 Serious Incident Form) are carried out and the Service Manager is notified. After discussion the Manger or agreed person will provide appropriate feedback to the person who raised the concern that action has been taken.
2. Complete the Service Incident Report and load this onto the NQAITS system within 24 hours of the disclosure being made.
3. Continue to liaise with the Educator to ensure that the child remains safe.

Disclosure of Child Abuse or Neglect Against an Educator or a Person Residing within the FDC Residence.

The Family Day Care Educator is required to report any allegation of abuse, neglect or assault, including sexual assault to the Nominated Supervisor of the Family Day Care Service. This includes any allegations made against any immediate family member or anyone at the premises, regardless of age.

1. If an allegation is made to the Service by a member of the public, including a parent, the information will be documented and the Manager and/or appropriate Educator Support Officer will investigate the incident and if deemed necessary, make the necessary reports.
2. If the allegation is made about someone other than the Family Day Care Educator, the Family Day Care Educators must not discuss in any way to alert the person suspected of child abuse that a concern has been raised.
3. The notification must be made no more than twenty-four (24) hours after the day on which the incident or allegation was made as per Policy 3.1 - Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness.
4. Where an allegation of physical, sexual, emotional, psychological abuse or neglect is investigated by the Department for Child Protection, the Family Day Care Service will be guided in its decisions by the recommendations of the officers of the Department of Child

Protection, and take whatever action is deemed appropriate for the safety and welfare of all the children in care.

The Service will:

1. Ensure that the Nature Alliance FDC reporting procedures (NA- IFRM-0019 Serious Incident Form) are carried out and the Service Manager is notified. After discussion the Manger or agreed person will provide appropriate feedback to the person who raised the concern that action has been taken.
2. Complete the Service Incident Report and load this onto the NQAITS system within 24 hours of the disclosure being made.
3. Continue to liaise with the Educator to ensure that the child remains safe.

Confidentiality

It is important that any notification remains confidential, as it is vitally important to remember that no confirmation of any allegation can be made until the matter is investigated. The individual who makes the notification should not inform the suspected perpetrator (if known). This ensures the matter can be investigated without contamination of evidence or pre-rehearsed statements. It also minimises the risk of retaliation on the child for disclosing.

Breach Of Child Protection Policy

All Educators, Educator assistants, students, volunteers and staff working with children have a duty of care to support and protect children. A breach of our *Child Protection Policy* may include if a person:

- does something that a reasonable person in that person's position would not do in a particular situation
- fails to do something that a reasonable person in that person's position would do in the circumstances or
- acts or fails to act in a way that causes harm to someone the person owes a duty of care.

A breach is any action or inaction by any individual within Nature Alliance FDC Service, including children and young people, that fails to comply with any part of the policy. Educators and staff must ensure they take all reasonable steps to ensure children are protected from harm and hazard at all times education and care is provided at the service. Educators, staff and families are encouraged to discuss with management any concerns regarding situations that may compromise or breach professional boundaries that may place children at risk of harm.

Managing A Breach In Child Protection Policy

Management will investigate any breaches to this policy in a fair, unbiased and supportive manner by:

- liaising with Department of Communities for appropriate processes to ensure chain of evidence is not destroyed or compromised
- not undertaking and investigating the allegation whilst the Department of Communities or the Police are conducting an investigation
- removal of the Educator or staff member from a role with contact with children or young people until authorities conclude their investigation (if required)
- Management may undertake an investigation if the Department of Communities or the Police are not conducting their own investigation or if their action has concluded.

Management will:

- give the Educator, staff member, student or volunteer the opportunity to provide their version of events
- document the details of the breach, including the versions of all parties
- record the outcome clearly and without bias
- ensure the matters in relation to the breach are kept confidential
- reach a decision based on discussion and consideration of all evidence.

Outcome Of a Breach In Child Protection Policy

Staff members or Educators who fail to adhere to this policy may be in breach of their terms of employment or membership. Students or volunteers who fail to comply to this policy may face termination of their engagement. Depending on the nature of the breach outcomes may include:

- emphasising the relevant element of the Child Protection Policy and procedure
- providing closer supervision
- further education and training
- providing mediation between those involved in the incident (where appropriate)
- disciplinary procedures, including dismissal of staff, termination of Membership for Educators /Ed Assistants and ceasing the engagements arrangement for students and volunteers.
- reviewing current policies and procedures and developing new policies and procedures if necessary

Employees and Educators are aware that Mandatory Reporting Procedures, including notification to the Department of Communities, operates alongside the Reportable Conduct Scheme and do not replace it.

Supporting Documents:

NA-FRM-0002 Incident Injury Trauma Illness Report
NA-IFRM-0019 Serious Incidents Form

Supporting Policies:

NA-POL-0001.7 Child Safety
NA-POL-0003.1 Incident, Injury, Trauma, and Illness
NA-POL-0022 Fit & Proper Personal Policy

Source

Child Care Desktop