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HP-4

Aviva Child Abuse and Protection Policy

1. Purpose

The Aviva Child Abuse and Protection policy has been developed to support staff (including volunteers, contractors and placement students) in identifying and responding to suspected cases of child abuse, including appropriate response to disclosures of abuse both on and off site. The policy reflects Aviva's commitment to protecting children, as society's most vulnerable citizens, in all its activities and actions. It is the individual and collective responsibility of all staff, volunteers and contractors of Aviva to ensure children are safe when in contact with the agency and to report any suspected incidence of child abuse either within or outside the agency. This responsibility is not only to protect children who are directly receiving services from Aviva but the children of Aviva's adult clients and/ or any other child who we believe may be at risk. The policy covers all staff, volunteers, contractors and placement students who work on and off Aviva premises and who are likely to have contact with children in the course of their activities for Aviva. The policy also highlights any key training required by staff to work safely with children, including child protection training.

Whilst exposure to family violence is itself a form of child abuse (there is a high rate of co-occurrence between intimate partner violence and physical abuse of children) and should be taken seriously by all Aviva staff, this policy is designed to address concerns of direct abuse targeted towards a child/children.

2. 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."

- **Child:** Any child or young person aged up to 17 years and who is not married or in a civil union.
- **Disclosure:** Information given to a staff member by a child, parent or caregiver or a third party in relation to suspected abuse or neglect.
- **Physical Abuse:** Non-accidental injuries.
- **Sexual Abuse:** The use of children for the sexual gratification of someone who takes advantage of their power and/or the child's trust.
- **Neglect:** The deprivation of necessities such as food, shelter, essential physical, medical and emotional care. **NB.** Failure to thrive is a form of neglect, where children experience deficits in their environment such as a lack of stimulation, spiritual or physical nourishment.
- **Emotional Abuse:** When the attitudes and behaviours of adults severely affect a child's emotional and physical development.

3. Signs of Abuse

- Signs of physical abuse may include injuries that cannot be adequately explained e.g. burns, fractures, genital injuries or sexually transmitted diseases. Other signs may include developmental delays such as being small for their age, cognitive delays, poor speech and social skills.
- Signs of emotional abuse/ neglect may include poor sleep, low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, inability to behave appropriately in social situations (dependent on developmental stage), excessive sadness or isolation, and any forms of self-harm.
- Signs of sexual abuse may include sexual interest that is inappropriate for the child's age, engaging in play that is sexualised, fear of a certain person, eating problems, aggression and disengagement. Older children/adolescents may have substance abuse or significant mental health issues.
- A child speaking about abuse or things that are happening that indicate possible abuse or neglect.

The above signs should not be taken in isolation to indicate definite abuse, but are signs that the child is experiencing some adverse life events. Staff with concerns for the welfare of a child should discuss these with their supervisor and colleagues to assess suitable next steps.

Aviva is committed to the prevention of child abuse, and to the protection of children and their rights. We aim to provide a safe, high quality environment in which the interest and welfare of the child is paramount, and there is strong awareness of abuse issues and intervention procedures. This policy is in line with the Children's Action Plan and has been reviewed in accordance with the Safer organisations, Safer children: Guidelines for child protection policies to build safer organisations as part of the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014.

4. Key Principles:

Children are at the centre of the decision making process and family/Whanau should be kept informed and involved (where it is safe) about concerns or disclosures by children and reports to statutory bodies regarding any concerns. The policy also encourages a culture where staff feel confident to report concerns (with the guidance of appropriate policies), and feel safe to challenge poor practice and openly discuss concerns.

- Aviva views child abuse or the suspicion of child abuse as a serious matter, requiring immediate and appropriate intervention
 - Aviva will advocate for the child to ensure their safety and well-being is paramount.
 - Aviva will endeavour to meet the cultural needs of the child
1. Staff and Volunteers Working with Children:
 - All staff and volunteers will have basic training in child abuse and protection
 - Aviva will ensure that anyone working with children will have knowledge of abuse indicators, implications for the child, whanau/family and caregivers, legal action, referral processes, and the principals of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014, Children and Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 and the Domestic Violence Act 1995.
 - Continued training and professional development for staff and volunteers will be encouraged and supported
 - Childcare will be approved by the relevant Client Services Manager
 2. Behaviour Management:
 - Aviva is a non-hitting environment, abusive and aggressive language is also not tolerated.
 - Alternative, prosocial methods of behaviour management will be modelled and advocated. Appropriate touching of children is defined by the agency as meeting the needs of the child, and not the adult
 3. Care Giving Routines:
 - Only staff familiar to the child will undertake these routines
 - Staff and children will be visible during these routines, and another adult will be informed when children are being cared for. This is an accountability measure.
 - Children visiting the bathroom during the delivery of the children's programme will be accompanied by one of the facilitators who will stand outside the bathroom.
 - Children sitting in the waiting area must be supervised by their parent until the relevant staff member arrives.
 4. Parents/whanau:
 - Aviva has an open door policy regarding care-giving routines
 - Parents will be familiar with children's routines, Aviva's policies relating to childcare, children's progress and the professional backgrounds of staff, including qualifications and experience
 - Staff will maintain confidentiality as per the complaints and confidentiality statement.
 - Information and education for parents about behaviour management and child abuse will be available
 - Parents will be encouraged to make use of workshops and education programmes organised by Aviva and other agencies

5. Relationship with other Agencies:

- Staff will have knowledge of our extensive community network, and be familiar with the resources available for support
- Staff members will take on an advocacy role for the relevant services of other agencies, and show a commitment to networking with groups working in the area of child abuse
- Referrals to appropriate services may over-ride the ethic of confidentiality, as the safety of children is our priority (please see list included in appendix A of suitable providers for referral pathways for children needing further support)

5. **Procedures and Response to Suspected Abuse**

5.1 **Key Principles:**

- Aviva is committed to immediate and appropriate intervention when abuse is suspected
- No staff member, volunteer or contractor will work alone on their suspicions
- Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained
- Where possible, parents and whanau will be consulted and become part of the response process

5.2 **Procedure:**

- Abuse is suspected
- Record any observations of the child's behaviour, the child's disclosure (if made) and any relevant additional information
- If a child discloses abuse listen carefully to what they are saying and reassure the child, ensure they understand they are not in trouble and that they have done the right thing
- Do not formally interview the child but assess the risk by asking open-ended questions e.g. "what happened next?"
- If the child is distressed provide a safe space with supervision until they are ready to return to normal activities
- If the child is in immediate danger contact the Police and inform them of your concerns
- Consult your supervisor and/or co-workers as soon as possible
- Consult relevant outside agencies including Child, Youth & Family on 0508326459
- Consult with care-givers if appropriate
- If you have concerns but you and your supervisor have agreed there is not enough evidence to warrant a notification, continue to monitor the situation closely.
- If you and your supervisor are agreed that your concerns warrant action, please report the abuse to Child Youth & Family
- If you believe the child is at immediate risk of further harm, ensure the child is safe from further abuse by removing them from the risk and contacting the police immediately
- Provide support for the family
- Seek medical help if appropriate by contacting Sexual Assault Services Canterbury (SASSC) who can support the child to access medical support.
- Seek support for yourself by contacting your supervisor and considering the use of the employee Assistance Programme (EAP)
- Offer/seek continued community support for family as appropriate

6. **Confidentiality and information sharing**

Under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 anyone who is aware that a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm (either physically, emotionally or sexually) or neglect must report the issue to Child, Youth and Family or the Police. This is also covered under the Privacy Act (Privacy Principle 11) which allows for reporting where there is a serious risk to individual health and safety.

6.1 **Procedure and Response to Suspicion of Abuse by an Aviva Staff Member:**

- Complaint made about worker to another staff member/Human Resources (if to another staff member in the first instance, Human Resources must then be informed of the allegation)
- Staff member against who the accusation has been made is informed of the investigation
- Suspend staff member with pay until investigation completed
- Staff against whom the allegation has been made is supported to seek legal/emotional help including EAP.
- Concerns reported to CYFS, Sexual Assault Team (SAT) or Police
- Internal and external investigation undertaken.
- If no evidence found by employer and or statutory body of abuse, worker cleared
- If sufficient evidence that abuse has occurred, worker dismissed immediately from employment.

7. The complaints procedure and child abuse policy must:

- Protect children and ensure access to justice
- Allay fears for parents and workers
- Prevent long- term personal and professional damage to innocent workers
- Ensure that any person guilty of child abuse is excluded from employment at Aviva and where it is known that a client has a previous conviction of child abuse they will be seen offsite.

References

Aviva Code of Conduct
Aviva Recruitment Policy
Child Restraint and Transportation Policy
Aviva employee policy
Privacy Policy
EAP Policy

Legislation

Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989
Domestic Violence Act 1996 (Amended 2014)
Vulnerable Children Act 2014
Privacy Act 1993

Appendix A

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| Budgeting Support | |
| <i>Catholic Social Services</i> – advocacy and budgeting | 379 0012 |
| <i>Christchurch Budget Services</i> – offers one to one budgeting (can visit in the home or office), budgeting in schools | 366 3422 |
| <i>City Mission</i> | 365 0635 |
| <i>Kingdom Resources</i> – budgeting Advice | 332 1700 |
| <i>Methodist Mission</i> | 375 1470 |
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| Children: | |
| <i>Barnados</i> – supervised contact, ‘Footsteps to feeling safe’, a programme for children exposed to domestic violence | 365 3923 |
| <i>Cholmondeley</i> – emergency and planned short term respite for children aged between 5-12 years old | 3299 832 |
| <i>Footsteps</i> – an Early Childhood Educator goes into the home to support the learning and development of children aged between 1-5 years. It can be intensive and is a free service available to those who need it | 0800 366 878 |
| <i>Methodist Mission</i> – child (age 3-13) counselling, Wise Up programme – 8 week life skills group | 375 1470 |
| <i>Te Mapua trust</i> – children’s camps, Eastern suburbs school support (transport to school, behaviour intervention), and community support (whanau day, parent’s group, warriors group for children aged 5-15) | 021 628 362 |
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| Counselling Services: | |
| <i>Catholic Social Services</i> | 379 0012 |
| <i>Family Court</i> | 0800 268 787 04 802 3930 |
| <i>Relationship Services</i> – telephone counselling, some face to face counselling for individuals, couples, families; stopping violence programmes | 741 9201 |
| <i>Presbyterian Support</i> – work with individuals, families, couples, children to adults, regarding most issues | 366 5472 |
| <i>St John of God Waipuna Trust</i> – youth and family | 386 2159 |
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| Cultural Services: | |
| <u>Maori</u> | |
| <i>He Ara Tika</i> – mentoring for Maori youth aged 13-17 by Maori Mentor | 07 386832 |
| <i>He Waka Tapu</i> – offers drug and alcohol assessment and referral, tool box parenting programme, Stopping Violence Programme (Family Court approved), Stopping Violence group for Wahine, Rangitahi (Youth) services, gambling counselling, healthy promotion and services, wananga (meeting/groups) | 0800 439 252 |
| <i>Maori Gambling Helpline</i> | 0800 654 656 |
| <i>Nga Hau E Wha national Marae</i> | 388 7685 |
| <i>Pura Pura Whetu Trust</i> – Kaupapa Maori mental health services | 379 8001 |
| <i>Rehua Marae</i> – Kaupapa Maori support including budgeting; home based social work support; day care; parenting support, personal domestic care | 355 5615 |

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| <i>Te Puna Oranga</i> – counselling for individuals, couples, women, children, youth; parenting mothers and fathers group, whanau support in trauma, abuse; physical, emotional, sexual whanau hui education; sexually abusive Tane 1:1 work | 381 8472 |
| <i>Te Puna Oranga</i> – Sexual Abuse Response – acute rape/sexual assault crisis support (support through DSAC medical and forensic examinations, support during Police statement) | 0800 222 042 |
| <i>Salvation Army Men's Hostel</i> | 338 5154 |
| YWCA – emergency and transitional accommodation. No bookings; must have an interview. Rent charged | 365 8720 |