# OP-POL-20 Child protection POLICY

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Taranaki Future Health and Safety Policy.

1. Purpose

Taranaki Futures is committed to child protection and its responsibilities under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014. The act applies to children up to age 18, or up to age 25 in the event they are in the care of Oranga Tamariki. As an organisation with interaction with youth we are well placed to contribute to the protection of all children. We have a responsibility to ensure that our staff can identify the signs of possible abuse or neglect and are able to take appropriate action, in a safe environment.

Taranaki Futures CPP provides an organisation-wide policy for responding to suspected abuse or neglect of a child. It provides information on resources to help identify possible signs of abuse or neglect, and sets out what we do if we do suspect abuse or neglect. The purpose of this CPP is to imbed a culture of child protection that consistently safeguards and promotes the well-being of children.

2. Rationale

This policy applies to all Taranaki Futures board, staff and volunteers. Staff employed, contracted to, or people volunteering with, Taranaki Futures have varying levels of contact with children, depending on their role. They may have:

1. Regular, unsupervised access to children
2. Contact with children where other adults are present
3. Little or no contact with children

All categories of individuals will hereafter be referred to as ‘staff’. While some may have limited or no direct contact with children, they may interact with schools, students, whanau and the wider education or social sector community in their role. As a consequence of this interaction, staff may be in a position to identify actual, or be suspicious of, abuse or neglect.

In addition, staff with limited or no contact with children may be in a position to identify systemic opportunities and weaknesses in the protection of children, and/or to promote a culture where the child, and child protection, is at the centre of all procedures, processes and decision-making.

3. Responsibilities

Taranaki Futures will:-

• Make the safety and wellbeing of children a priority within the organisation.

• Promote a culture where people feel confident to raise their concerns.

• Provide procedures that clearly outline the appropriate course of action.

* Provide training on this policy and related procedures and forms to all staff.
* Recruitment of non-paid volunteers to operate as Taranaki Futures Staff that have direct interaction with youth will include:
  + Application form completion (including disclosure of other organisations where the individual has interactions with children)
  + Interview
  + Police check
* The employment of all paid Taranaki staff will include
  + Application form completion
  + Interview
  + Police check
* Review policy and procedures regularly.

4. Definitions of abuse and neglect

There are four high level types of harm applicable to this policy, defined below:

1. Physical abuse

Any acts that may result in the physical harm of a child or young person. It can be, but is not limited to: bruising, cutting, hitting, beating, biting, burning, causing abrasions, strangulation, suffocation, drowning, poisoning and fabricated or induced illness.

1. Emotional abuse

Any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development. This can include:

* Patterns of isolation, degradation, constant criticism or negative comparison to others. Isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child can also be emotional abuse.
* Exposure to family/whānau or intimate partner violence.

1. Sexual abuse

Any acts that involve forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. Sexual abuse can be, but is not limited to:

* Contact abuse: touching breasts, genital/anal fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetrative or non-penetrative contact with the anus or genitals, encouraging the child to perform such acts on the perpetrator or another, involvement of the child in activities for the purposes of pornography or prostitution
* Non-contact abuse: exhibitionism, voyeurism, exposure to pornographic or sexual imagery, inappropriate photography or depictions of sexual or suggestive behaviors or comments.

1. Neglect

This is the most common form of abuse, and although the effects may not be as obvious as physical abuse, it is just as serious. Neglect can be:

* Physical (not providing the necessities of life, like a warm place, food and clothing).
* Emotional (not providing comfort, attention and love).
* Neglectful supervision (leaving children without someone safe looking after them).
* Medical neglect (not taking care of health needs).
* Educational neglect (allowing chronic truancy, failure to enrol in education or inattention to education needs).

5. Potential indicators of abuse or neglect

Indicators are signs or symptoms that, when found either on their own or in various combinations, point to possible abuse, family violence or neglect. In many cases, indicators are found in combinations or clusters.

Indicators do not necessarily prove or mean that a child has been harmed. They are clues that alert us that abuse may have occurred and that a child may require help or protection. Sometimes indicators can result from life events which do not involve abuse, e.g. accidental injury.

1. Reporting and responding to suspected abuse or neglect about a child

If a staff member has a concern about a child’s safety or wellbeing they will follow the Taranaki Futures Procedure for reporting child abuse or neglect. In all instances this includes reporting of the concern to the organisations Designated Person for Child Protection. This person is:

Taranaki Futures Designated Person for Child Protection

Person Belinda Mooney

Role General Manager

Phone 021 0274 0555

Email belinda.mooney@taranakifutures.org

The severity of the suspected abuse or neglect is not up to the reporting staff member or the designated person to determine. The Designated Person for Child Protection has the ultimate responsibility to ensure appropriate authorities are notified.

In consultation with the designated person, staff should always respond if they suspect abuse or neglect of a child, regardless of who may be involved in alignment with the Child Protection Procedure.

1. Allegations or concerns about Taranaki Futures staff

In the event an allegation is made about a Taranaki Futures staff member the procedure for Taranaki Futures Procedure for responding to allegations of child abuse or neglect by a staff member is to be followed. In all instances this includes reporting the concern to the organisations designated person and standing down the suspected staff member immediately without prejudice as a precautionary measure.

In the event the allocation is made regarding the designated child protection person, the issue is to be referred to the Chair of the Audit & Risk Board.

Taranaki Futures Audit & Risk Board Chair

Person Lisa MacNee

Role Audit & Risk Board Chair

Phone 027 683 9744

Email [lisa.macnee@tsb.co.nz](mailto:lisa.macnee@tsb.co.nz)

1. Guidelines for responding to a complainant

In the event a child (or other individual) communicates a concern to you it is important to respond appropriately. First and foremost individuals receiving a complaint should:

* Believe the child/individual

If a report of concern comes to you, it is not up to you to ascertain the truth of it. Report it in alignment with the applicable procedure.

* Remain calm and listen

Remaining calm will help to make the child/individual feel at ease, and is more likely to tell you the concern in greater depth.

* Do not interrupt

Let the child/individual tell you the full story. Do not ask leading questions (e.g. was it a blue car?).

* Reassure the child – but do not make any promises

Comfort the child/individual and tell them they have done the right thing in telling you.

* Do not investigate the allegation yourself

Do not ask the child fact checking questions, or seek validation of the concern with external parties yourself. The Police or Oranga Tamariki will do this if necessary.

* Keep questions to a minimum

Ask only essential questions (i.e. to ascertain immediate safety status for the child).

Policy Reviewed – Every 3 years

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| Date Approved: | June 2019 |
| Review Date: | June 2022 |

Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_