

Policy Document No:	ELC20
Category:	Early Learning
Topic:	Establishing a Protective Environment



Date of issue: November 2006
Last Review Date: July 2017

Considerations

Philosophy: Protecting children and staff; caring supportive environment.

Children's needs: Children to feel safe.

Parent's needs: Families to be informed of protective procedures and why they are necessary; reassurance of their child's safety; confidentiality maintained.

Staff needs: Training in providing a protective environment, what to do in the event of identified abuse, and current trends & issues; protection from the risk of allegations being made against themselves; their concerns to be heard and acted upon; two way communication with families and management; debriefing/counselling related to specific incidents; discussions and evaluations at staff meetings re protective practices; confidentiality maintained; knowing where to go for advice and support.

Management needs: Appropriate policies implemented; training on the issues and appropriate protective practices; support for staff to implement policies; feedback from staff; clear understanding of management responsibilities and liabilities; confidentiality maintained; knowing where to go for advice and support; knowledge that all staff have current Working with Children Check.

Background and Legislation

Laws of Negligence;

Industrial Relations Act 19 (Cth);

Privacy Act 1988 (Cth);

Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act (2004) & Regulations (2005)

Guide to the National Quality Standard: elements 2.1.2, 2.1.4, 2.3.1, 2.3.2

National Privacy Principles – www.privacy.gov.au/act/index.html

Education and Care Services National Regulations Part 4, regulations 168 (2.h); 168 (2.a). Ministerial Council For Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2011

Education and Care Services National Law Act. sections 165, 167

Child Safe Standards - Ministerial Order 870, Education Training and Reform Act 2006

Reportable Conduct Scheme, Commission for Children and Young People

Policy Statement

Mount Scopus Memorial College aims to create an environment that minimizes the risk of children being harmed in any way whilst in the care of the centre, and to protect staff from the possibility that allegations of child maltreatment could be falsely made against them, as a result of their work at the centre.

To be read in conjunction with the College's [Child Protection policy \(ED34\)](#).

How the policy will be implemented – specific practices and procedures

The centre will ensure clear observation of child occupied areas through the following means:

- Reviewing overall staff supervision within the service to ensure all child occupied areas can be viewed by more than one staff member at all times.
- Ensuring furniture/equipment is positioned in a way that all areas are visible.
- Placement of reflective mirrors and video monitoring systems to assist in supervision.

Water Safety Procedures

Water use within the Centre will be supervised to ensure the safety of children, staff and families is a priority

- Children will be supervised at all times during water play experience.
- The hygienic state of water will be assessed before it is used for children's play.
- Staff will ensure water troughs or containers for water play are filled to a safe level. These activities will be supervised at all times by adults and containers or troughs will be emptied onto garden areas after use. Staff will discuss with the children that this water is for the purpose of play and not for consumption.
- The children's play areas will be checked each morning to ensure that no containers or pools of water are accessible for children. If rain occurs during the day, outdoor play areas will be checked for safety prior to the children entering the outdoor environment.
- Buckets used for general cleaning in the Centre will be emptied immediately after use. No buckets will be left in play areas or accessible to children.
- Drinking water will be accessible, hygienically stored and maintained. The children will be provided with clean drinking water at all times. This water will be supervised to ensure that it is safe and hygienic for consuming. Water containers must always be securely sealed. At the end of each day, the water container will be emptied and cleaned thoroughly.
- Staff will use their breaks to consume hot drinks away from the children.
- Special care will be taken to ensure water safety during excursions. If an excursion occurs where children must pass water the staff will make certain that correct staff: child ratios are met and follow all guidelines as set out in the Excursion Policy.

Ensuring validity of visitor

Visitors/trades people will be screened when entering the centre to ensure they have a valid reason to be on site. This will be implemented using the following strategies:

- The front gate will be watched by security guards at all times, all people entering the premises will be identified as they enter.
- Staff members will wear identification badges.
- Parents and staff will be educated in regard to not allowing unauthorized access to others, as they enter or leave the premises
- Unauthorized people will be asked to provide identification, preferably photo ID.
- Appointments will only be made with people who have a valid reason for being in the centre.
- All people who perform duties at the centre, (paid or unpaid), will if required by the relevant legislation, provide a current criminal record check or assessment notice in accordance with the Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004, before being allowed on the premises. (i.e. student assessor; trades persons; volunteers; students, staff etc.)

Recruitment and employment of staff

The service will ensure staff working with children do not have a criminal history, outstanding charges pending, or outstanding warrant in relation to offences which may place children in their care at risk of physical or sexual harm. To this end all new and current staff must provide a criminal record check or current assessment notice under the Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004, in accordance with the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*

- All information obtained through criminal record screening will be treated in strict confidence and only used to determine suitability for employment by the service.
- Within the staff recruitment process the applicant's knowledge and experience of child protection issues will be determined.
- All new employees will be oriented to the service's child protection policies and procedures. Whenever possible new employees will have a period of time to work alongside current staff to familiarise themselves with the children, parents, other staff and centre procedures, prior to taking up their new responsibilities in a full capacity.

Supervision of children

Children will be supervised at a level appropriate to the age and needs of the children, the program, the time of day and associated risks and in accordance with the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.

- When contact staff members are on duty they are responsible for the direct supervision of children. If there is only one staff member outside, the responsible staff member must be **actively** (not sitting, moving around to ensure supervision is of all children) supervising the children at all times. Staff will arrange play areas to ensure children can be effectively supervised, and will communicate effectively with each other about the supervision of children i.e. inform each other before leaving the room.
- Staff members actively engaged in the supervision of children must not engage in cleaning, administrative or other duties, except where this involves undertaking minor incidental duties such as marking the roll for a care session, or carrying out minor cleaning duties arising directly from the care of an enrolled child.
- Staff will be alert to and aware of potential hazards and risk of injury to children and will use their knowledge of each child to ensure children are adequately supervised at all times.
- Staff members will position themselves to ensure effective supervision of all children under their care at all times. Levels of supervision will be adapted in relation to:
 - size of group
 - number of staff supervising
 - experience of staff and their personal knowledge of the children
 - individual characteristics, developmental level, and age range of the group of children
 - types of activities taking place
 - size of, and potential hazards within the play area
 - transitions from one activity to another i.e. are children hyped up; excited; tired; just awakening from sleep etc.
- Staff will foster children's independence and competence by supporting children to undertake some activities that involve risk taking. However, staff will always intervene to prevent harm, whenever this is necessary.
- Staffing arrangements will allow flexibility within daily routines and supervision of individuals or small groups of children during meal-time and sleep or rest times etc.
- Supervision of children away from the main play areas (i.e. bathrooms, toilets, cubbies, tunnels, quiet areas, sleep areas etc.) will be carefully monitored.
- Staff will regularly evaluate supervisory practices, and especially after accidents or incidents, excursions, or the introduction of new activities.

Rosters are planned to ensure appropriate supervision of children is maintained and staff on non-contact duties are replaced in order to ensure appropriate staff: child ratios are maintained in accordance with the requirements of *Education and Care Services National Regulations, 2011*.

Individual children will only be released from the centre to authorised people.

- staff will ensure that only authorized people (parents and emergency contacts) will collect the children at the end of the day.

Supervision and support of staff

- All staff members will be asked to thoroughly familiarise themselves with the Mount *Scopus Memorial College Duty of Care Manual* and act in accordance with the practices and procedures outlined there.
- Child protection issues will be discussed regularly at staff meetings. Staff will be encouraged to share any observations or concerns in regard to child and staff protection risks. Resolutions will be sought to eliminate risks, and management will be advised of the issues and current strategies to resolve them.
- The centre's staff performance management system will address staff performance in relation to child protection.

- Staff will support each other to limit the time they are left alone with children.
- Volunteers, students and other visitors or trades people will not be left alone with children at any time.
- Casual relief staff will be rostered on to ensure a permanent staff member is working with them at all times. When this is not possible strategies will be implemented to minimise times when the relief person is working alone with any group of children.

Staff Training on Protection Issues

- The centre requires all staff to participate in training on child protection by relevant authorities. This training should cover:
 - Protective Behaviours Program;
 - signs and symptoms of child maltreatment;
 - how to respond if a child discloses sexual abuse;
 - how to observe and record children's behaviour;
 - process of reporting child maltreatment to Child FIRST, Child Protection and Family Services;
- A guide to recognising signs of abuse or neglect (see attachment) will be made available to all staff who have attended relevant training, and will be regularly discussed at Staff Meetings, to remind staff of the possible signs of child abuse, and the procedures they should follow if a child in their care displays behaviour or physical signs that could indicate abuse has taken place.
- The centre will ensure that staff are made aware of current legislation and reporting requirements related to child protection and maltreatment and that a system for the reporting and recording of suspicious incidents is in place.
- Management will ensure they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in regard to child protection.
- All staff are regularly reminded about the centre's policies, procedures, and confidentiality requirements in regard to child protection and issues are discussed at staff meetings.

Children's Education

- Staff will foster children's self esteem and positive self image through their interactions with children.
- The centre's behaviour management policy will be followed to positively guide children's appropriate behaviour.
- Staff will encourage children to be assertive (ie. Learn when to stand up for themselves and say no when appropriate), and to communicate their needs and concerns. This may be done through role play, modeling, storytelling, puppets etc.
- Staff will talk with children about ways to keep themselves safe and encourage children to believe they have a right to feel safe at all times. Strategies will include:
 - Inviting community support services ie. police, fire service, health nurse, doctor, dentist etc. to the centre to talk to the children;
 - Going out into the community and applying safety skills ie. How to cross a road safely etc.
- Staff will build relationships with all children based on trust, so that children know that it is safe to talk to staff about any concern/issue they may have, and that the staff will listen to them. Children should be encouraged to keep telling people until they feel they are heard.
- Staff will convey to children that there is nothing that will happen to them that is so awful that they cannot talk about it to someone they trust.
- Children are naturally curious about their bodies and will occasionally explore and compare while interacting through everyday play experiences. These behaviours are a normal part of a child's development.
- Staff will provide information about sexuality in an age appropriate way.
- Staff will inform parents of the particular occurrence and environment in which the behaviour was displayed, during their normal daily communication exchange with the parent.

Information for parents

- The centre will make available to all parents information on establishing a protective environment, and the Protective Behaviours Program.
- Staff will be available to discuss any issues with parents.
- The centre will keep parents up to date with any changes and seek their input.
- The centre's policy on establishing a protective environment will be made available to parents.
- Parents will be informed about relevant training undertaken by staff in the centre newsletter.

Approved by the College Principal:

Date: July 2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Keenan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'K'.