

Dealing with Suspected or Alleged Child Abuse Policy

Board Approval Date: 5 July 2011

Revision Date: _____

The provisions of the Children Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 are acknowledged.

Definition:

Child abuse means the harming (whether physically emotionally or sexually) ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person. (Child: under 14 years. Young Person 14-17 years) *Section 2, Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989.*

Rationale:

BBBS of Christchurch requires that a safe environment be provided for the wellbeing of children and young people that ensures they are treated with dignity and respect.

Purpose:

- To ensure the safety of children and young people is paramount: *Paramouncy Principle, Section 6, CYP&F Act 1989*
- To provide procedures for dealing with all cases of suspected or alleged abuse and/or neglect.

Guidelines:

Seeking advice and reporting:

- Where a worker or other person suspects child abuse or has child abuse disclosed to them they shall follow the procedures outlined below.
- The same procedures should be followed where a worker or any person has abuse reported to them relating to a child or young person who is not a participant in the group programme.

Notes:

1. *Reporting suspected child abuse is voluntary under New Zealand law. However BBBS of Christchurch and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) requires that all necessary steps should be taken to keep children and young people safe from abuse.*
2. *Under section 15 of the CYP&F Act people may report directly to a Social Worker or the Police.*
3. *Section 16 of the Act provides protection from prosecution for people making a report in good faith.*

Managing reporting:

- It will be the responsibility of the Board Chairperson and the Manager/Senior Mentoring Coordinator to manage the process (as appropriate excluding the alleged offender). It is important these decisions are not made in isolation.
- Where the Manager/Senior Mentoring Coordinator or the Board Chairperson is implicated, another member of the Board shall have the management responsibility in consultation with another person as above.

Safety Of The Child:

The first consideration will be to ensure the immediate safety of the child

Informing parents:

Decisions to inform parents about suspected or alleged abuse will be made only after consultation between BBBS of Christchurch and the statutory agency involved (Child Youth & Family or Police).

Suspected or alleged offender:

No person shall confront any person identified as allegedly responsible for abuse. This is the role of the statutory agency involved.

Confidentiality/Privacy:

- To protect the victim(s), the alleged offender and the integrity of the investigation, it is important to ensure that issues are kept as confidential as possible.
- Where there is a serious or imminent threat to personal or public safety, workers are entitled to disclose confidential information. In such cases workers will inform the child/young person of any information divulged to a third party in a way that is appropriate for the child/young person's age and maturity.
- Personal details will be disclosed only to those who need to know (usually Child Youth & Family, Police, people with responsibility for children and young people and/or a supervisor).
- Storage of information: Information should be stored securely for at least the duration of any investigation and legal proceedings. Advice should be sought from the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (0800 803 909).

Support:

- BBBS of Christchurch shall ensure support is provided to all parties involved in the reporting process and to any others (e.g. workers) as needed.
- BBBS of Christchurch shall seek advice relating to support from Child Youth & Family, the police, and ACC Counselling.

Withdrawing workers:

When any mentor or Mentoring Coordinator is suspected of or alleged to have abused a child/young person that person will be suspended from their position of responsibility for the duration of the investigation. Their further involvement would need to be decided upon by the Trust Board. Such a decision is to be made after the completion of any investigation. Care must be taken to ensure that the legal process is not hindered in any way.

Training:

- BBBS of Christchurch shall ensure workers are trained to implement this policy.
- The Trust shall ensure appropriate training is provided at least annually to equip workers to implement this policy.

Dealing with Suspected or Alleged Child Abuse Procedure1. Respond appropriately

A.	Listen:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do not put words into a child's mouth ➤ Allow them to tell only as much as they want ➤ Ensure the child's immediate safety
B.	Let them know:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ You're glad they told you ➤ You're sorry it happened ➤ It's not their fault ➤ You'll help
C.	Do not...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ... over-react/panic or ask leading questions ➤ ... promise a child you will not tell anybody

Note: it is most important to reassure the child, thank them for telling you, and let them know you will get help.

2. Inform:

- Inform the Board Chairperson or the Senior Mentoring Coordinator/Manager (excluding the alleged offender) who will manage the steps outlined in 3,4,5,6,7.
- This person shall consult with another person, either the Board Chairperson or the Senior Mentoring Coordinator/Manager (as appropriate excluding the alleged offender).
- If unavailable seek advice directly from Child Youth & Family or the Police.

3. Document:

- Record the dates, details and anything said by yourself and the child, using the exact words of the child and yourself.
- Where a notification form needs to be completed, it should be attached to the notes above, faxed to Child Youth & Family or the police and then stored securely for the duration of the investigation.

4. Seek Advice:

Seek advice from Child Youth & Family or the Police to determine the appropriate course of action regarding the child's safety.

5. Take further action based on the Agency's advice:

Report the alleged abuse to the appropriate agency based on advice given by Child Youth & Family or the police. Once an agency is involved the agency will investigate and the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Christchurch Trust will act on the advice from the agencies.

6. Support:

Seek support for the child or young person and the person who took the disclosure from the agency involved. A safety plan for a worker who takes the disclosure from a child may need to be devised.