

Synergy Wellness:

Child Protection Policy

Key Contacts:

Oranga Tamariki	0508 326 459
Police	111

Principle: Synergy Wellness is committed to the prevention of abuse and to the well-being of children, young people, vulnerable adults and their families.

Purpose: The purpose of this child protection policy is to ensure that all children, young people, vulnerable adults and their families involved with Synergy Wellness feel safe, knowing that a comprehensive and effective policy with attached practices and guidelines in place, in order to prevent or stop abuse of any kind. This policy will be reviewed before Jan 1st 2020.

Definitions: Child - any person under the age of 18, who is not married or in a civil union. (Vulnerable Children's Act 2014, Section 5) Staff - all those employed by Synergy Wellness, whether paid or voluntary, full-time or part-time.

Definition of Child Abuse: The Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989. defines child abuse as "...the harming (whether physically, emotionally, sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation of any child or young person".

Physical abuse is a non-accidental act on a child that results in physical harm. This includes, but is not limited to, beating, hitting, shaking, burning, drowning, suffocating, biting, poisoning or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical abuse also involves the fabrication or inducing of illness.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause sever and persistent adverse effect on the child's emotional development. This can include a pattern of rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child. It may also include age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It also includes the seeing or hearing the ill treatment of others.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities (penetrative and non-penetrative, for example, rape, kissing, touching, masturbation) as well as non-contact acts such as involving children in the looking at or production of sexual images, sexual activities and sexual behaviours.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, causing long term serious harm to the child's health or development. It may also include neglect of a child's basic or emotional needs.

Family violence is physical, emotional, sexual and other abuse by someone of a person with whom they have or have had some form of intimate relationship with, such as marriage or cohabitation, in order to maintain power and control over a person. It is important to be vigilant to any signs, particularly if children are being affected.

Roles and Responsibilities of Staff: All staff have a responsibility to keep children safe and have a role in reporting concerns of potential or actual abuse. It is the intention of Synergy Wellness to ensure that all staff understand their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the safety of children at all times. Each staff member is to be familiar with this child protection policy.

Sustained abuse and neglect of children, wherever it occurs, can have major long term effects on all aspects of children's health, development and well-being and their ability to sustain stable and meaningful relationships in the future.

It is the responsibility of all staff to be vigilant, have knowledge and awareness of the indicators of neglect, potential or actual abuse and to report any concerns, suspicions or allegations of suspected abuse immediately and ensure that the concern is taken seriously and recorded. Synergy Wellness and the services provided, sit at the centre of healthcare and are uniquely placed to recognise and respond to concerns for the well-being of children. There are a number of ways or situations where concerns might be raised with a member of staff which may or may not involve a child making a disclosure directly to a member of staff. Staff should, therefore, be alert and aware of the fact that a range of situations could give rise to concerns about child protection.

Designated Person for Child Protection: There is a Designated Child Protection Officer, which is a formal role within Synergy Wellness. At 01.03.19 this person is Chanita Downing. It is the role of the Designated Child Protection Officer to support staff in child protection matters and provide guidance. Any staff member will action and lead plans

of action, with the support of the Designated Child Protection Officer.

Each staff member has responsibility to ensure they access appropriate professional development activities in relation to child protection, and Synergy Wellness will support such as activities wherever possible. Staff are able to utilise Staff Meetings as an opportunity to reflect on their practice in relation to child protection matters, or individual supervision sessions can be arranged if required.

The role of the Designated Child Protection Officer includes:

- Support Staff in child protection matters and provide guidance
- Co-ordinate any response on a particular issue.
- Have an overview on relevant staff training
- Ensure Synergy Wellness policy and procedure is maintained.
- Maintain the Child Protection folder and ensure requirements are met. Eg Police checks are done on time. Eg. Issues are recorded.
- Keep child protection front of mind for staff.
- Maintain an overview of trends and the adequacy of Synergy Wellness Child Protection Work.

Child Protection Procedures: All concerns of potential, suspected or alleged abuse must be brought to the attention of the Designated Child Protection Officer. If the Designated Child Protection Officer is unavailable then consultation should occur with another appropriate staff person. A decision will be made as to whether to seek further advice and/or notify Oranga Tamariki.

If a child makes a verbal disclosure to a member of staff it is important that staff take what the child says seriously.

Synergy Wellness has a duty of care to the children it provides services to. A failure to report a significant concern about a child is a breach of that child's human rights.

Under no circumstances should a member of staff attempt to conduct an investigation or deal with concerns regarding child abuse alone.

All decisions taken, including if the concern does not require notifying Oranga Tamariki, must be recorded in writing using the 'Record of Issue or Concern Form' and kept securely in the Child Protection File with the reasons clearly identified. The 'Record of Issue or Concern Form' must be discussed with the Designated Child Protection Officer, and minuted within the next agency meeting minutes. A copy of this form is also to be placed in the clients file. Refer to Appendix 1.

Providing information to protect children better is not a breach in confidentiality or privacy. As Section 15 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 states "Any person who believes that a child or young person has been, or is likely to be, harmed (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treated, abused, neglected, or deprived may report the matter to the chief executive or constable".

Wherever possible the family/whanau should be kept informed of what information has been shared and to which agency, and for what purpose.

Refer to Appendix "Sharing personal information of families and vulnerable children" See Child Protection Folder.

It is expected that all child protection concerns are taken seriously and every practical step within reasonable time frames is taken to ensure the safety of the child. Should the Designated Child Protection Officer be unavailable, the Synergy Wellness staff member is to consult with other Synergy Wellness staff members, and also work in collaboration with other agencies already involved with the family in order to make a clear plan to action. Staff are able to contact Oranga Tamariki directly to gain guidance also.

The child protection file will be kept with all other Synergy Wellness policy information, which is held securely at 66 Prince Albert Road, Dunedin.

Safe Recruitment of Staff: All appointments (permanent, fixed term, student, casual or volunteer) to positions that have direct and/or frequent contact with children or young people will be conditional on police vetting. Synergy Wellness staff are classified as non critical in respect of the police vetting procedures.

Training of Staff: This section outlines Synergy Wellness's commitment that all staff who have contact with children, whether directly or indirectly, are able to promote the child's best interests. This includes what training they are given to support their understanding of child abuse.

All staff are responsible for ensuring their own professional development in child protection, which will be supported by management wherever applicable. All potential training opportunities to be circulated at Staff Meetings. All training undertaken to be recorded in the Training register.

Staff are able to utilise Staff Meetings as an opportunity to reflect on their practice in relation to child protection matters, or individual supervision sessions can be arranged if required.

Safe Working Practices: This section outlines the expected behaviours of staff that ensure they are working safely. All staff are expected to behave in a manner consistent with Synergy Wellness's Policy and Procedures Manual.

A relationship between an adult and a child or young person cannot be a relationship between equals. There is potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable young people. Adults have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

All staff are expected to behave in a manner that maintains appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others.

All contact with a child will be done so with the parents/caregivers/whanau knowledge and agreement.

Allegations made against members of staff: This section outlines the procedures to follow should an allegation of inappropriate behaviours towards a child be made against a member of staff. It is important to recognise that all disclosures of abuse of a child must be taken seriously, reported and investigated appropriately, with the safety of child being of highest concern.

Synergy Wellness will respond to suspicions and allegations of child abuse by a member of staff in a manner which best ensures children's immediate and long-term safety and will treat suspicions or allegations against a staff member with the same seriousness as suspicions or allegations made against any other person.

Synergy Wellness will not act alone, and will refer all suspected situations of child abuse to Police or Oranga Tamariki. The safety of the child will be the primary consideration, and no person in this organisation will collude to protect an adult or an organisation.

Allegations will be treated in such a way that the rights of adults and the stress upon the staff member are also taken into consideration. When abuse is suspected or an allegation made against a staff member, the first consideration will be to ensure the safety of the child.

When abuse is suspected, staff will follow the process for Child Protection Procedures included in this policy.

Allegations, suspicions or complaints of abuse against staff, volunteers or representatives of other agencies must be taken seriously and reported to the Manager or Clinical Services Leader who will deal with them immediately, sensitively and expeditiously within the procedures outlined in this Section.

It is NOT the responsibility of staff to investigate allegations of child abuse.

If the Police decide to undertake a criminal investigation then the member of staff may be suspended, without prejudice, as a precautionary measure. It is important that no internal investigation is undertaken, and no evidence gathered that might prejudice the criminal investigation.

The staff member in question will not have any contact with the child or the child's parents/caregivers/whanau until at least the appropriate investigations have taken place.

The suspected staff member will be prevented from having further unsupervised access to children during any investigation and will be informed fully of their rights.

If there is insufficient evidence to pursue a criminal prosecution, then a disciplinary investigation may still be undertaken if there is "reasonable cause to suspect" that abuse may have occurred. The allegation may represent inappropriate behaviour of poor practice by a member of staff which needs to be considered under internal disciplinary procedures.