



**Policy Name: Establishing a Child Safe Environment**

**Links to National Quality Framework:**

**Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010 No 104**  
New South Wales – Sections 166-167

**Education and Care Services National Regulations:** 76(a) (b); 84-86; 88-105; 161-166;  
168; 169 (2) (e) (f)

**National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age**  
**Care:** Standard 2.3; Standard 5.1; Standard 5.2; Standard 7.3

**The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia: Belonging, Being & Becoming –**  
Practice: Holistic approaches; Responsiveness to children; Intentional teaching; Assessment  
for learning.  
Outcomes: 1,2,3,5

**Rationale and policy considerations**

Rainbow Preschool Association understands it has a duty of care to ensure that all persons are provided with a high level of safety and protection during the hours of the service's operation. To this end all educators/staff will be fully informed about their responsibilities to implement and adhere to the service's child protection policies and procedures.

Rainbow Preschool believes that the best way to ensure children's protection at the centre is to establish an environment that minimises risks and sets out clear safeguards for educators and staff to follow. To this end educators need to learn about the nature of child protection. All educators and staff who work with children must be aware of the current child protection law and understand their obligations under that law.

The NSW Government has developed *Keep Them Safe: A shared approach to child wellbeing* in response to the Report of the special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW. All educators must be aware of this action plan and have completed up to date training in relation to changes and requirements. Rainbow Preschool is a non-government organisation (NGO) and a mandatory reporter. NSW requirements for mandatory reporting of suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect will be adhered to. See appendices.

**Philosophy**

Rainbow Preschool will ensure a documented approach to ensuring child protection and acting in the best interests of the child. Approach to professionalism will be exemplary and confidentiality and ethical conduct will be adhered to at all times.

**Children's Needs**



A child's right to feel safe, their right to care, safety and personal privacy will be acknowledged and protected. Counselling and support in the event of allegations of abuse will be offered.

### **Families' Needs**

Families will be informed of protective procedures and why they are necessary. Reassurance will be provided of their child's safety, and confidentiality will be maintained. Families need to feel assured every effort has been made by Rainbow Preschool to ensure their child is not in danger of abuse. Counselling and support will be offered.

### **Educator/Staff Needs**

Training in establishing a protective environment, what to do in the event of identified abuse, and current trends and issues will be provided. Staff will be protected from the risk of allegations being made against them and their concerns will be heard and acted upon. Two way communication with families and management will be ensured. Debriefing/counselling related to specific incidents will be provided. Discussions and evaluations at educator/staff meetings regarding protective practices will be conducted and confidentiality will be maintained. Information will be provided on where to go for advice and support.

### **Management Needs**

Management will ensure appropriate policies are implemented and training on the issues and appropriate protective practices are provided. Support for staff to implement policies, attain feedback from staff and attain a clear understanding of management responsibilities and liabilities will be offered. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. The Management Committee will have knowledge of appropriate clearances for all staff.

### **Policy Statement**

Rainbow Preschool aims to create an environment that minimises the risk of children being harmed in any way whilst in the care of the service, 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 service. Child abuse thrives in secrecy, therefore to prevent child abuse, the service will develop and maintain an open and aware culture where educators/staff and children are aware of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Rainbow Preschool believes it has a responsibility to all children attending the service to defend their right to care and protection. To support this right the service will follow the procedures recommended by the NSW Government Keep Them Safe (KTS) approach when dealing with any allegations of abuse or neglect of children, and will ensure that all educators/staff undergo appropriate professional development.

In cases where staff members suspect a child is being subjected to abuse or neglect outside the centre, the procedure outlined below should be followed:



- Any suspicions should be reported to the Nominated Supervisor as soon as possible, even intuitive feelings.
- Any bruising or signs of suspected physical abuse should be recorded immediately as they are noticed.
- The Nominated Supervisor or primary care giver is to note down any incidents of concern regarding the child in the appropriate confidential recording manual.
- If it is believed that there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of harm the Nominated Supervisor will make a report to the **Child Protection Helpline: 133627** (mandatory reporters).
- From this report it will be determined whether the child is at risk of significant harm and the service will be informed as to due process. If a child does not meet the significant harm threshold assistance will be offered in making referrals to other services or counselling after discussion with the family.
- Suspected neglect and emotional abuse may have to be noted down over a period of time before there is sufficient reason to contact the authorities. For this purpose, any incident should be recorded, with the date and signature of the relevant staff person, in order to maintain an accurate record, and this record is to remain in a secure location within the Preschool.
- If there is any reason to question a parent's or staff member's actions with a child then it should be brought to the Nominated Supervisor's immediate attention. If there is question of risk of harm to the child, the Nominated Supervisor and/or staff member will follow the procedure outlined in the above section.

Physical touching from caregiver to child is an important part of quality care and nurturing. Acceptable touching includes hugging (for example to greet or farewell a child, or to comfort), having a child sit on your lap, rocking (for example to assist them in sleeping), rubbing their back (for example to reassure and comfort), kissing (for example an injured finger) etc. Touching for hygiene reasons includes changing children's clothes, bathing, assisting with toileting etc. Children's genitals should only be touched lightly when necessary for cleansing purposes.

Children always have the right to refuse an adult's touch, and need to be taught about acceptable and unacceptable touches in a non-threatening way.

**Note: Staff and Licensee are mandatory reporters.**

Rainbow Preschool believes it also has a responsibility to its employees to defend their right to confidentiality unless allegations of abuse against them are substantiated.

## **Strategies for Policy Implementation**

### **The Environment**

Rainbow Preschool will ensure clear observation of child occupied areas through the following means:

- Reviewing overall educator/staff supervision within the service to ensure all child occupied areas can be viewed by an educator/staff member at all times.



- Ensuring furniture/equipment is positioned in a way that all areas are visible.

#### **Security code system in place:**

- The side gate and the Red Room and Blue Room doors will remain locked at all times, and families will have access through use of their security code. Other visitors must come to the office.
- Families will be given a PIN on enrolment, which they can share with other family members who regularly visit the service.
- Families and educators/staff will be educated in regards to not allowing unauthorised access to others as they enter or leave the premises, or giving their PIN to unauthorised persons.
- The PIN will be changed annually to ensure past users/educators/staff do not have ongoing access.
- Visitors/students/trades people will be screened when entering the service to ensure they have a valid reason to be on site. All visitors will sign in and out on arrival and departure.
- Unauthorised people will be asked to provide identification. Preferably photo ID.
- Where the visitor/person collecting a child is unable to provide appropriate ID the service will ask the visitor to wait while the parent/caregiver is contacted to ensure verification.

#### **Recruitment and Employment of Educators/Staff**

- Rainbow Preschool will ensure all educators/staff working with children provide a current Working With Children Check. The Working With Children Check will be verified by Rainbow Preschool.
- Educators/Staff found to have an adverse national criminal history check will be given the opportunity to discuss details with the employer to confirm the criminal conviction details are accurate and the circumstances of the conviction.
- The result of the Working With Children Check will either clear the applicant to work with children for 5 years, or will be a bar against working with children. Cleared applicants are subject to ongoing monitoring, and relevant new records may lead to the clearance being revoked.
- Within the educator/staff recruitment process the applicant's knowledge and experience of child protection issues will be determined.
- Prior to any appointment or offer of employment, the applicant's referees will be contacted to determine:
  - details of the applicant's previous employment
  - any history regarding child protection issues
  - the applicant's reliability and consistency in implementing duty of care practices
  - the applicant's supervision skills



- the applicant's employment record will be carefully checked in regard to the reasons for breaks in service, the reasons for any change of employment, and to ensure that the references provided are linked to recent employment.
- All new educators and employees will be oriented to the service's child protection policies and procedures and educator/staff code of conduct. Whenever possible new educators and employees will have a period of time to work alongside current staff to familiarise themselves with the children, families, other educators/staff and service procedures, prior to taking up their new responsibilities in a full capacity.
- All educators and employees are provided with clear duty statements that describe the daily tasks and responsibilities of their position, and identify lines of reporting and who they are responsible to.

### **Supervision of Children**

- Children will be supervised at a level appropriate to the age and needs of the children, the program, and time of day and associated risks in accordance with the Education and Care Services National Regulations.
- Supervision of children away from the main play areas (i.e. bathrooms, toilets, nappy change areas, cubbies, tunnels, quiet areas etc.) is carefully monitored.
- At times of the day when staffing is at a minimum educators/staff will be aware of the risks this creates. Educators will ensure they know the whereabouts of each other, and the children within the service. Strategies will be implemented to ensure that any visitors to the service are approved for access.
- Rosters are planned to ensure appropriate supervision of children is maintained. Educators on non-contact duties are replaced in order to ensure appropriate educator: child ratios are maintained in accordance with the requirements of the Education and Care Services National Regulations.
- Educators will be aware that children have had different life experiences and are at different developmental stages.
- Individual children will only be released from the service to authorised people.
- Educators will undertake appropriate consultation and referral regarding children's behaviour with family cooperation and approval. (e.g. Inclusion Support Agencies; Child psychologists etc.)

### **Supervision and support of educators/staff**

- Child protection issues will be discussed regularly at staff meetings.
- Staff are encouraged to share any observations or concerns in regard to child and staff protection risks. Resolutions are sought to eliminate risks, and management is advised of the issues and current strategies to resolve them.
- The service's staff performance management system addresses staff performance in relation to child protection.
- Educators/staff will support each other to limit the time they are left alone with children.
- Visitors or trades people will not be left alone with children at any time.



- Volunteers and students must be supervised by an educator that has attained the age of 18 years and holds or is working towards an approved Diploma level education and care qualification, whenever they are educating or caring for children.
- Educators/staff will not leave the service alone with individual children except in emergencies and in accordance with other service policies.
- Grievance will be dealt with in accordance with the service's grievance procedure.
- Any allegations of child abuse or neglect made against a staff member will be treated with strict confidentiality whilst taking immediate action to protect children at risk in consultation with the child protection authority.

### **Educator/staff training**

The service requires all educators/staff to participate in training on child protection organised by relevant child protection authorities or support agencies. All staff need to complete or be prepared to complete current training on child protection. CHCCILD401A, *Identify and Respond to children and young people at risk* is a national unit of competency which focuses on the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfil duty of care requirements and apply relevant legislation, policies, and procedures in responding to children and young people.

- This training will include information regarding:
  - establishing a Protective Environment;
  - what are appropriate and inappropriate behaviours in relation to children;
  - the nature of child abuse and why some children are victimised;
  - signs and symptoms of child maltreatment;
  - how to respond if a child discloses sexual abuse;
  - how to observe and record children's behaviours;
  - process of reporting child maltreatment to relevant child protection and regulatory authorities;
  - child protection authority's role in child protection issues.
- A guide to recognising signs of abuse or neglect will be made available to all educators/staff who have attended child protection training, and will be regularly discussed at staff meetings, as a reminder 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 service will ensure that both management and educators/staff are knowledgeable about 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.
- The service will access current information from the relevant state/territory child protection authority, about the procedures to be taken in relation to allegations of child abuse or neglect. Employer and employee responsibilities in relation to allegations of child abuse are included in educator/staff and management/committee handbooks. These responsibilities are highlighted to new educators/staff and committee members at their induction.



- All educators/staff are regularly reminded about the service's policies, procedures, and confidentiality requirements in regard to child protection and issues are discussed at educator/staff meetings.

### **Children's education and empowerment**

- Educators will foster children's self-esteem and positive self-image through their interactions and relationships with children.
- The service's Interactions with Children policy will be followed to positively guide children's appropriate behaviour.
- Educators will encourage children to be assertive (i.e. 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, storytelling, puppets etc.
- Educators will role model assertive behaviour and language.
- Educators will build relationships with all children based on trust, and will empower children to discuss what is 'safe' and who may be a 'safe' person to talk to.
- Educators will provide information about sexuality in an age appropriate way.
- 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. Educators will inform parents/guardians of the particular occurrence and environment in which the behaviour was displayed, during their normal daily communication exchange with the parent.

### **Information for families**

- Educators will be available to discuss any issues with parents/guardians.
- The service will keep families up to date with any changes and seek their input.
- The service's policy on Establishing a Child Safe Environment will be made available to families.
- Families will be informed about relevant training undertaken by educators/staff in the service newsletter.

### **Reporting concerns**

- Rainbow Preschool will inform individuals as to the process to follow to report an issue or complaint about an issue relating to child protection or report an allegation of abuse; and how the service will manage complaints and/or allegations of misconduct against a staff member, volunteer or service user.
- All concerns will be acted upon in a confidential and uniform manner.
- Mandatory reporting requirements in line with child protection law will be adhered to.



**Further Sources:**

**Policy Created Date: May 2014**

**Policy Review Date: May 2015**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

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