



Mountain Community Children's Centre Inc.

Providing a Child Safe Environment

Rationale:

Our service has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that the rights and best interests of the child are paramount and that we will provide training, resources, information and guidance to support this in order to;

- Ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service is protected at all times.
- Ensure that people educating and caring for children at the service act in the best interests of the child
- Protect and advocate the rights of all children to feel safe, and be safe, at all times.
- Maintaining a culture in which children's rights are respected.
- Encouraging active participation from families at the service, supporting a partnership approach and shared responsibility for children's health, safety, wellbeing and development.

Aim:

All children have the right to experience quality education and care in an environment that promotes opportunities to thrive with adults who safeguard and advocate for their health, safety, security and wellbeing including the right to;

- Be asked to express their views and wishes about matters affecting their lives and to have those views appropriately considered by adults.
- Feel and be safe in their interactions with adults and other children and young people.
- Understand, as early as possible, what is meant by 'feeling and being safe'.

Procedure:

The Physical Environment

In order to promote a safe physical environment, we will (see also Maintenance of Building and Equipment Policy, Outdoor Safety Checklists, Risk Assessments for Excursions, Start/End of Day Check);

- Ensure all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards.
- Remove, repair or replace worn and damaged buildings, structures equipment and resources which may provide a safety risk for children in a timely manner.
- Ensure learning environments are established that provide appropriate child groupings, sufficient space, and include carefully chosen and well-maintained resources and equipment.
- Organise indoor and outdoor spaces to ensure risks to the health and safety are minimised.
- Conduct a risk assessment of the service environment on a quarterly basis to determine any risks to children's health and safety.
- Analyse and evaluate the risks associated with identified hazards.
- Determine appropriate ways to eliminate or control identified hazards.
- Review risk assessments after any serious incident report is made to the Regulatory Authority.
- Ensure smoking is banned within the grounds of, and within four meters of any entrance of an enclosed public space.

Staffing and Supervision

- Ensure that sufficient numbers of educators are employed to ensure adequate supervision of children at all times.
- Manage rosters to not only ensure that adequate numbers of educators are on duty to meet ratio and qualification requirements, but that duty of care implications are considered to ensure adequate supervision at all times.
- Ensure screening and suitability of staff and volunteers as per the legislation and policy at the time of employment and as part of an ongoing process.
- Respond proactively to emerging staff performance concerns.

Child Protection (Refer to the Child Protection Policy)

- All educators and volunteers of our service are Mandatory Reporters and are required to report to the Child Protection Helpline (Phone: 132 111 or eReport at: <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/>) if they have reasonable grounds to suspect child or young person is at risk of significant harm and have current concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person.
- The Mandatory Reporter Guide (see resources) will be used, to guide decision making and determine whether or not to report to the Child Protection Helpline under the new risk of significant harm reporting threshold.
- Staff will undertake training in order to effectively: » make appropriate responses to all disclosures of abuse and any allegation of abuse against staff members of the service; » understand the responsibilities and processes as a mandatory reporter; » be able to recognise the factors that increase a child's

vulnerability to maltreatment; » be aware of the vulnerabilities which may indicate a need to assess, monitor or curtail the behaviour of individuals in relation to children and young people within organisations.

Child Safe Standards and our commitment to the safety of children and young people (Refer to Child Safe Code of Conduct)

- Our Service is committed to being a child safe organisation and endorses the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian Child Safe Standards and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, placing the protection of children as a priority of our responsibilities and obligations. The Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission provide guidance for our Service to ensure our policies and procedures, strategies and attitudes, ensure children's safety is paramount.
- Our Service has a zero tolerance to child abuse, and we are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We promote diversity and tolerance and aim to form equitable and positive relationships with children. We ensure children participate in decisions affecting them and listen and respect their suggestions and ideas. We respond to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm by reporting to the relevant authorities.
- We are dedicated in promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

Emergency and Evacuation Procedures (Refer to Emergency Evacuation Policy)

- Copies of the emergency and evacuation floor plan is displayed in prominent positions near each exit of the service premises, including indoor and outdoor learning areas.
- All staff are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures and regulatory requirements.
- Rehearsals for emergency and evacuation procedures, including lock downs, snake drills, fire drills are conducted at least once every 3 months. Records will be kept for all rehearsals (refer to WH&S folder)

Code of Conduct (Refer to Staff Code of Conduct and Child Safe Code of Conduct)

Reporting and Responding to Complaints (Refer to Grievance Complaints Policy Families – Staff)

- Feedback from children, families, educators, staff and the wider community is fundamental in creating an evolving Childcare Service working towards the highest standard of care and education.
- We aim to investigate all complaints and grievances with a high standard of equity and fairness. Our Service believes in procedural fairness and natural justice that govern the strategies and practices, which include: the right to be heard fairly, the right to an unbiased decision made by an objective decision maker, the right to have the decision based on relevant evidence.

Roles and Responsibilities

Authority/Responsibility for Approved Provider

- Ensure the service operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations with regard to the delivery and collection of children at all times.
- Ensure all staff have access to relevant professional development.
- Ensure that the Nominated Supervisor and staff members at the service who work with children are advised of current child protection legislation, its application, and any obligations that they may have under that law (Regulation 84).

Authority/Responsibility for Nominated Supervisor

- Provide all staff and educators working directly with children with a copy of the Mandatory Reporter Guide (How to Guide) to assist them in their reporting.
- Provide all staff and educators working directly with children with access to the Child Wellbeing and Child Protection NSW Interagency Guidelines.
- Ensuring screening and suitability processes are maintained to meet policy and legislated requirements.
- Identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement this policy
- Keeping up to date and complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.

Authority/Responsibility for Nominated Supervisor

- Co-operating with other services and/or professionals in the best interests of children and their families.

- Ensuring that families are made aware of support services available to them and of the assistance these services can provide.
- Ensuring that all staff who work with children are supported to implement this policy in the service.
- Protecting the rights of children and families and encouraging their participation in decision-making at the service.

Early Childhood Educators

- Act in accordance with the obligations outlined in this policy.
- Raise concerns when barriers or threats to the protection of children and young people's safety and wellbeing are identified, including through the conduct of other adults at the site/service.
- Keeping up to date and complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.
- Follow all record keeping requirements.
- Undertaking appropriate training and education on child protection.
- Identifying any potential for risk and harm to a child at the service and developing and implementing effective prevention strategies in consultation with the approved provider and the nominated supervisor.
- Co-operating with other services and/or professionals in the best interests of children and their families.
- Informing families of support services available to them (such as Families NSW), and of the assistance these services can provide.
- Ensuring that no child is left alone (or is out of sight) with a contractor, visitor, volunteer, student or parent/guardian at the service.
- Implementing the procedures for reporting suspected child abuse.
- Notifying the nominated supervisor or the approved provider immediately on becoming aware of any concerns, complaints or allegations regarding the health, safety and welfare of a child at the centre.
- Offering support to the child and their family, and to other staff in response to concerns or reports relating to the health, safety and wellbeing of a child at the service,
- Maintaining confidentiality at all times.
- Adhering to all service policies.

Families

- Reading and complying with this policy.
- Reporting any concerns, including in relation to potential for child abuse, to the Nominated Supervisor.

Reg 168

National Quality Standard 2

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this Policy every 18 months or sooner if regulations change.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved. In accordance with R.172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.