

Child Safe Environment

- Child Protection

Policy Statement

Meerilinga believes it has a responsibility to all children in our contact and therefore advocates their right to care and protection.

We are committed to providing a child safe environment where children's safety and wellbeing is supported and children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. We embed the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA](#) and promotes a culture of safety and wellbeing to minimise the risk of child abuse or harm to children whilst promoting children's sense of security and belonging.

To support this right, we will ensure our workers, including registered volunteers understand the meaning, importance and benefits of providing a child safe environment and critically, understand their obligations and requirements when dealing with any allegations of child abuse, neglect or vulnerability of risk, to ensure the protection of all children.

Policy Purpose

Our focus is to build a child safe environment which is reflected in our service policies and procedures, where all workers are committed to identifying possible risk and significant risk of harm to children and young people in our Services. We comprehend our duty of care responsibilities to protect children from all types of abuse and neglect and will adhere to our moral and legislative obligations at all times.

We aim to implement effective strategies to assist in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children. Our Service will act in the best interest of each child, assisting them to develop to their full potential in a secure and child safe environment.

Meerilinga is committed to the:

- United Nations Rights of the Child, subsequent articles in relation to child protection.
- Children and Community Services Act 2004.
- Education and Care Services National Law Act and Regulations WA.
- Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Amendment Act 2022, Working with Children (Screening) Act 2004 and Working with Children (Screening) Regulations 2005.
- WA Reportable Conduct Scheme, under the Parliamentary Commissioner Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2022.
- National Quality Framework, including the National Quality Standards.
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

This policy provides guidance to all Meerilinga workers about the Organisation’s standards and guidelines in relation to child protection and the provision of access to children in our services. Further information can be located at [Department of Communities – Child Protection](#)

This extends to a cyber safe culture which works in accordance with our service philosophy, privacy and legislative requirements to ensure the cyber safety of enrolled children, educators and families.

Scope

This policy applies to the Board of Governors, Executive, all workers, volunteers, students and those employed on a fee for service or contract basis while conducting Meerilinga business.

Exclusions

Policy Review

Bi-annually or from time to time when the organisation may make changes to this policy to improve the effectiveness of its operations and customer service.

Policy Reviewed	17 May 2023	By	Advisor Policy & Compliance
Approved By	CEO		
Previous Review	23 June 2022		

Implementation

Under the National Law we will ensure all children being educated and cared for are adequately supervised and every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury.

Safety checks maintain basic standards of safety within our service. Workers will complete a daily inspection of the physical environment where foreseeable risks may be identified and controlled to prevent harm or injury to service users.

To ensure a child safe environment free from hazards, we have implemented practices and continue to monitor service policies and procedures that uphold Australian Safety Standards.

The premises, all equipment and furniture used within the service are audited to ensure all aspects are safe, clean and in good repair. We understand that hazards are specific to developmental stages; Educators are aware that toys and equipment need to be checked to ensure they are safe and developmentally appropriate for children. Regular checks occur within the service to ensure that all toys, furniture and equipment are in good condition and working order.

Chemicals and hazardous equipment are safely stored away from children and handled appropriately. A register of hazardous chemicals used at the service, including Safety Data Sheets.

The service has a risk management system where hazards are identified and managed within the workplace to ensure a child safe environment. The key principles of risk management include:

1. Identifying all hazards in the environment
2. Assess the risk of each hazard
3. Control or manage the risk
4. Monitor and improve safety

It is the responsibility of all workers at the service to implement the risk management system and to complete a risk assessment where children's safety may be jeopardised and when organising an excursion/incursion.

Refer to Incursion, Excursion and Transportation Policy

The service will ensure there is an adequate number of educators employed and on duty to meet ratio and qualification requirements. Appropriate supervision of children must be maintained at all times.

All Meerilinga premises and service venues are smoke free.

Child Protection

In Western Australia, under the [Children and Community Services Act 2004](#), a child is a person under the age of 18 years.

Meerilinga strongly opposes any type of abuse against a child and endorses high quality practices in relation to protecting children and young people.

Relevant workers are deemed to be all persons engaged through employment or volunteering with Meerilinga in education, care, community or parenting services.

Meerilinga is committed to the safety, welfare, wellbeing and support of all children and young people. will treat all children with the utmost respect and understanding.

We believe that:

- Children are capable of the same range of emotions as adults.
- Children's emotions are real and need to be accepted by adults.
- A reaction given to a child from an adult in a child's early stages of emotional development can be positive or detrimental depending on the adult's behaviour.
- Children, who preserve, enhance and better understand their body's response to an emotion is more able to predict the outcome from a situation and evade them or ask for help.

The approved provider, nominated supervisor, responsible persons and workers (including volunteers) and students working directly with children are advised of the existence and application of the current Child Protection Law and any obligations they have under that law. They have an important role to support children and young people, and to identify concerns that may jeopardise their safety, welfare, or wellbeing. Approved Child Protection training will be completed at induction and annually to maintain currency of knowledge.

Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor and Workers in Meerilinga Children, Community and Parenting Services will:

- Be able to recognise indicators of abuse.
- Respect what a child discloses, taking it seriously and follow up their concerns through the appropriate channels.
- Allow children to be part of decision-making processes where appropriate.
- Comprehend their obligations as mandatory reporters under the legislation and their requirement to report all concerns about a child suffering abuse or neglect where they believe on reasonable grounds a child is at risk of significant harm.
- Contact the police on 000 if there is an immediate danger to a child and intervene if it is safe to do so.
- Refer families to appropriate agencies where there are concerns about the parents' ability to care for the child safely, including the protecting them from harm. These services may be located through the services provided by the not-for-profit community sector and funded by the Department of Communities. Family consent will be sought before making referrals.
- Promote the welfare, safety and wellbeing of children at the Service.
- Prepare accurate records recording exactly what happened, conversations that took place and what was observed to pass on to the relevant authorities to assist with any investigation.
- Understand that allegations of abuse or suspected abuse against them are treated in the same way as allegations of abuse against other people.
- NOT investigate suspicion of abuse or neglect but collect only enough information to substantiate concerns and pass on to the Child Protection Helpline or appropriate authority.

Working with Children Check (WWC)

People working or volunteering with children in Western Australia must, by law, have a Working with Children Check under the Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Amendment Act 2022 (the WWC Act). The Working with Children (WWC) Screening Unit provides checks of workers and volunteers to organisations, contributing to creating safe environments for children and other vulnerable people. Under the WWC Act, exemptions apply to child and parent volunteers if the person does not have a WCC Card.

A WWC Check is an assessment of whether a person poses an unacceptable risk to children. As part of the process, the WWC Screening Unit will look at criminal history, child protection information and other information. WWC Checks are valid for three years.

The following applies to individuals employed or volunteering at Meerilinga:

Working with Children Check Card is required for	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Governors and Executive. • All workers and students over 18 years, including those working in a co-located children and community service building. • Trainee (paid) workers under 18 years. • Registered volunteer workers of the Organisation. 	

Exemption , with the associated documents completed and provided	
Students under 18 years (MTC or external)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal History Statement T514 and • A written character reference from secondary education provider or agent
Excursion Volunteer Early Learning Program (Parent or Legal Guardian Only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excursion Volunteer Declaration T1034

Validating WWC and Record Keeping

Meerilinga is registered with the WWC Screening Unit to validate WWC cards. Through the Register Card Holders online form, Meerilinga will register all new employees, volunteers or students with an existing WWC and validate BEFORE they begin working with children.

A copy of the WWC cards for individuals is uploaded to the human resources and student management systems. WWC expiry dates for card holders are entered into the system with a 60 and 30 day reminder of expiry to the individual and their Direct Report.

In the case of a new WWC application, the application receipt is proof a person has a pending application and, in most cases, allows them to start or continue 'child-related work'. An application receipt is valid for as long as it takes for an outcome to be made and can be used as proof of lodgement for employers, volunteer organisations or 'education providers'.

WWC cardholders and applicants are responsible for notifying the WWC Screening Unit of a change in name, residential address, contact details and child-related work status (starting or ceasing). Where an individual ceases the organisation, they are removed

A person with a pending charge or conviction for a 'Class 1 offence' committed as an adult cannot commence child-related work until a full assessment has been completed. A person with a current 'Interim Negative Notice' or 'Negative Notice' cannot engage in child-related work.

WWC Card Holders are subject to ongoing monitoring and updated records may lead to the clearance being revoked. If new information about a person means they pose a risk to children's safety, that person's check will be re-assessed and, if necessary, be prohibited from working with children. The WWC Screening Unit will inform both the card holder and any organisations they're linked to about the change in status.

[Offences and penalties employers, volunteer organisations and education providers](#) for not complying with the Working with Children (Screening) Act 2004.

Accusations Against Workers

Meerilinga believes it has a responsibility to its workers to defend their right to confidentiality, support and legal advice in relation to allegations of abuse against them until substantiated. In the instance of allegations and/or of substantiated claims the following documents and policies will provide guidance: Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct, Confidentiality; Security and Safety; Wellness; Supervision; Grievances, Complaints and Appeals; Employment; Workplace Health and Safety. The Chief Executive Officer may determine that the person/s be suspended (with pay in the instance of a worker) until such allegation is substantiated or otherwise. If substantiated, the person/s will be terminated immediately.

Accusations of abuse or suspected abuse against educators, staff members, and volunteers, the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider are treated in the same way as allegations against other people. Reports will be made according to the procedure where a child is at risk of significant abuse by a person at the Service. If the Supervisor is involved in the abuse then the Approved Provider or most senior educator will assist in reporting.

Documenting a Suspicion of Harm

Where there is concern about the safety of a child, the reporter will:

- Record their concerns in a non-judgmental and accurate manner as soon as possible.
- Record their own observations as well as precise details of any discussion with a parent (who may for example explain a noticeable mark on a child).
- Not endeavour to conduct their own investigation.
- Document as soon as possible so the details are accurately apprehended including:
 - Child's personal details (name, address, DOB, details of siblings)
 - Time, date and place of the suspicion
 - Full details of the suspected abuse
 - Date of report and signature

Responding and Documenting a Disclosure

A disclosure of harm emerges when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened or is likely to happen. When a child discloses that he or she has been abused, it is an opportunity for an adult to provide immediate support and comfort and to assist in protecting the child from the abuse. It is also a chance to help the child connect

to professional services that can keep them safe, provide support and facilitate their recovery from trauma.

Disclosure is about seeking support and your response can have a great impact on the child or young person's ability to seek further help and recover from the trauma.

Refer to Process 3 - Responding to a Child Disclosing Abuse at the end of this policy

Making a Report

If a child is at immediate risk and Police or medical assistance is required, dial 000.

Once a person forms belief, on reasonable grounds, that child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, psychological) or neglect has occurred or is occurring; they must make a report to the Department of Communities - Child Protection and Family Support's and Mandatory Reporting Service.

When making a report to the Department, have the following information available:

- Details about the child/young person and family
- The reasons you are concerned
- The immediate risk to the child
- Whether or not the child or family has support
- What may need to happen to make the child safe
- Your contact details, so that the officer can call you to obtain further information if required or to provide feedback.

Refer to Process 4 - Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect at the end of this policy.

Failure to make a report can result in a fine of up to \$6,000. A person can be prosecuted within three (3) years after failing to make a report. After that, any action will be at the Attorney General's discretion.

Confidentiality

It is important that any notification remains confidential, as it is vitally important to remember that no confirmation of any allegation can be made until the matter is investigated. The individual who makes notification should not inform the suspected perpetrator (if known). This ensures the matter can be investigated without contamination of evidence or pre-rehearsed statements. It also minimises the risk of retaliation on the child for disclosing.

Protection for Reporters

All reporters are protected against retribution for making or proposing to make a report under amendments to the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*. The identity of the reporter is protected by law from being disclosed, except in certain exceptional circumstances. Provided the report is made in good faith:

- The report will not breach standards of professional conduct
- The report can't lead to defamation and civil and criminal liability

- The report is not admissible in any proceedings as evidence against the person who made the report
- A person cannot be compelled by a court to provide the report or disclose its contents
- The identity of the person making the report is protected.

A report is also an exempt document under the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

Refer to Process 5 - Notifier Protection at the end of this policy

Sharing of Information

The Western Australian Government recognises that for agencies and services working with children and families there will be times when it is necessary to share information to protect their safety and wellbeing.

The Children and Community Services Act 2004 (CCS Act) is the legislative basis for child protection responses in Western Australia. It enables information sharing between agencies to protect the wellbeing of children. The Department for Child Protection and Family Support provides a guide on information sharing for government and non-government agencies. There may be situations where workers are required to share information about a child without consent.

The circumstances when this may apply include:

- A child may be placed at further risk or harm
- The child poses a risk to themselves or is a risk to others
- Reasonable efforts to obtain consent have failed
- You are unable to contact the parent/s
- There may or would be a risk to your safety if consent was sought
- It is clear from previous contact that consent would not be given.

As a guide, you may wish to share information that relates to:

- Any known events or history of the child suffering harm
- The impact of a parent's mental illness, substance misuse, disability or history of family and domestic violence on his/her ability to care for their child
- Protecting a child and/or adult exposed to FDV
- A person in the household who may pose a risk to the child
- Any periods in which the child has been cared for by other people
- Any significant issues relating to the child's siblings
- The child's physical health, including any treatment needs
- Any psychological and emotional difficulties the child may have
- The child's education, including any special educational needs
- Any positive feedback about a child or family you are working with
- Any disabilities the child may have, including any care requirements
- Any known allergies and dietary requirements of the child

- Any information that assists an assessment of the safety of a person subjected to FDV, which may include information about a perpetrator and their participation in counselling and treatment programs.

Reportable Conduct Scheme – Allegations Against Employees, Volunteers or Students (or Contractors)

The Approved Provider has the legislative obligation under the Reportable Conduct Scheme (the Scheme) to notify the Ombudsman of reportable allegations and convictions against their workers (including volunteers and contractors), investigate the allegation and advise the Ombudsman of the outcome of the investigation.

Reportable conduct includes: sexual offences; sexual misconduct; physical assault; and other prescribed offences.

The Ombudsman will monitor, oversee and review these investigations.

The Ombudsman will also be able to share information where appropriate to better prevent and protect children from abuse, this includes with the Working with Children Screening Unit of the Department of Communities, relevant regulators and the WA Police Force.

Refer to Process 4 - Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect at the end of this policy.

Breach of Child Protection

All people working with children have a duty of care to support and protect children. A duty of care is breached if a person:

- Does something that a reasonable person in that person's position would not do in a particular situation
- Fails to do something that a reasonable person in that person's position would do in the circumstances or
- Acts or fails to act in a way that causes harm to someone the person owes a duty of care.

Managing a Breach in Child Protection

Executive will investigate the breaches in a fair, unbiased and supportive manner by:

- Discussing the breach with all people concerned will be advised of the process
- Giving the person the opportunity to provide their version of events
- Documenting the details of the breach, including the versions of all parties.
- Recording the outcome clearly without bias
- Ensuring the matters in relation to the breach are kept confidential
- Reach a decision based on discussion and consideration of all evidence.

Outcome of a Breach in Child Protection

Depending on the nature of the breach outcomes may include:

- Emphasising the relevant element of the child protection policy and procedure
- Providing closer supervision
- Further education and training
- Facilitating between those involved in the incident (where appropriate)
- Disciplinary procedures if required
- Reviewing current policies and procedures and developing new policies and procedures if necessary.

Educating Children About Protective Behaviour

Our program will educate children

- About acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and what is appropriate and inappropriate contact at an age appropriate level and understanding
- About their right to feel safe at all times
- To say 'no' to anything that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable
- About how to use their own knowledge and understanding to feel safe.
- To identify signs that they do not feel safe and need to be attentive and think clearly.
- That there is no secret or story that is too horrific, that they can't share with someone they trust.
- That educators are available for them if they have any concerns.
- To tell educators of any suspicious activities or people.
- To recognise and express their feelings verbally and non-verbally.
- That they can choose to change the way they are feeling.
- To model and discuss protective behaviours with the children using resources from Protective Behaviours:
<https://wacss.com.au/programs/child-protection-education/> as well as arranging visitors such as Constable Care and Community Police.

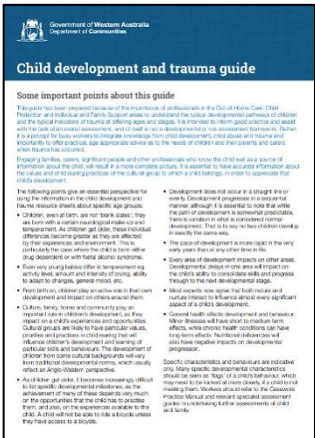
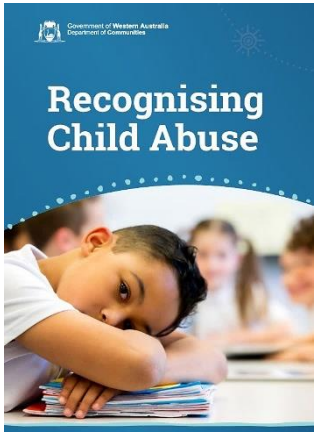
Resources for Indicators of Abuse or Neglect

- Child Safe Organisations <https://childsafefhumanrights.gov.au>
- Government of Western Australia. Department of Communities. Child Protection. [Concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person](#)
- Government of Western Australia. [Department of Communities. Mandatory Reporting Guide: Western Australia. \(2023\).](#)
- NAPCAN - <https://www.napcan.org.au/napcan-brochures/>
- Ombudsman Western Australia. [Reportable Conduct Scheme.](#)
- Western Australia Commissioner for Children and Young People (CCYP) - [Child Safe Standards](#)

Child Protection Process	
Process Owner	CEO
Effective Date	17 May 2023
Date of Last Revision	23 June 2022

Process Details

	Description
1.	<p>Identifying Abuse or Neglect</p> <p>Child abuse refers to any kind of action or failure to act that results in harm or possible harm to a child or young person. They may feel fear, shame or confusion and be afraid to tell anyone of the abuse, particularly if the person harming them is known to them and their family.</p> <p>Recognising common signs across the different types of abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Physical ▶ Sexual ▶ Emotional ▶ Neglect <p>This Guide also includes where to go for advice and support →</p> <p>The Child Development and Trauma Guide has been developed to assist practitioners to understand typical developmental pathways of children and recognise indicators of trauma at different ages and stages.</p> <p>The Guide covers the following age groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 0 to 12 months ▶ 12 months to 3 years ▶ 3 to 5 years ▶ 7 to 9 years ▶ 9 to 12 years ▶ 12 to 18 years → <p>Child Sexual Behaviours</p> <p>Along with the physical, psychological and social changes that children experience as part of growing up, children go through stages of sexual development and display sexual behaviours as part of their normal childhood growth and change. A child's sexual</p>



Process Details

	Description
	<p>development includes curiosity about the physical changes in their body as well as changes in their sexual knowledge, understanding and behaviours.</p> <p>Resources and support services if there is concern about a child's sexual behaviour: → Department of Communities – Concerns about a child's sexual behaviour</p>
2.	<p>Concerns for the Safety or Wellbeing of a Child or Young Person</p> <p>If a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation, contact the Western Australia Police immediately by dialling 000.</p> <p>Concerns about a child's wellbeing must be raised with immediate Direct Report/Manager/Advisor first or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) if they are unavailable. Manager/Advisor will notify CEO and guide through the steps to support the child, the reporter and team.</p> <p>The WA Department of Communities 'What to do... when you are concerned a child is being abused or neglected' is displayed at all Meerilinga Children and Community Service locations and will be followed:</p> <div data-bbox="354 947 1339 1591" style="border: 2px solid blue; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;">What to do... when you are concerned a child is being abused or neglected</p> <p>Protecting children is everyone's business Children and young people rely on responsible adults to help keep them safe. If a child talks to you about worries or feeling unsafe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the best interests of the child or young person. Listen carefully to what they say. Write down the information. <p>If your agency has child protection guidelines, refer to them.</p> <p>Ask yourself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the child showing behaviours or saying things that might suggest abuse or neglect? Has new information increased your concerns about the child? Do you continue to worry after the child has visited your service? Do you feel you need to 'do something' to help the child? <p>Abuse and neglect Consider the following to understand how a child might experience abuse and neglect:</p> <p>Physical abuse When a child has been severely hurt or injured. This can be from excessive physical punishment, beating, shaking babies, giving alcohol and drugs, strangling, scalding/burning, punching, leaving a child alone in a car.</p> <p>Emotional abuse When a child has been repeatedly treated in ways that damages their ability to feel and express a range of emotions and/or being repeatedly treated in ways that damages their self-esteem, personal development, and intellectual development. This can be from verbal abuse, rejection, threatening words or behaviours, bullying and teasing. This can also be from belittling, being made to feel worthless, unloved, "stupid" etc. The term 'emotional abuse' includes psychological abuse (the sustained, repetitive, inappropriate, ill-treatment of a child or young person through behaviours including threatening, isolating, neglecting, discrediting, ignoring and inappropriate encouragement) and exposure to family and domestic violence, which causes serious emotional, psychological and physical harm to children, as well as placing them at increased likelihood of abuse and neglect.</p> <p>Sexual abuse When a child has been touched or involved in sexual activities not appropriate to the child's age and development. This can be from sexual penetration, inappropriate touching, seeing sexual acts or being exposed to pornographic materials.</p> <p>Neglect When a child has not been provided enough care or supervision which has resulted in the child being injured or their development affected. This can be from lack of food, shelter or affection, a lack of adult supervision, untreated medical problems and abandonment.</p> <p>What to do when...</p> <p>You are worried but there is nothing specific to report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to stay in touch with the family. Talk to them about services that can help families. Encourage their involvement in parenting activities. Link them with community groups from similar cultural or religious backgrounds. Link the family with day care or play activities. Talk with someone experienced in supporting families or in child protection (a colleague, or worker in another agency). <p>You can describe the abuse or neglect, or the risk. Contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Department of Communities or Crisis Care if outside business hours Police if you are concerned about the child's immediate safety or if criminal acts have occurred. <p>Referring to the Department of Communities An officer will discuss your concerns and ask about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child's details. Why you believe the child has been abused or neglected, or is at risk. The child's immediate risk. The person suspected of causing the harm. Your ongoing contact with the child. <p>The Department will make decisions about the kind of action that needs to be taken.</p> <p>Contacts and resources</p> <p>Department of Communities Call the Central Intake Team on 1800 273 889 or email cpduty@communities.wa.gov.au</p> <p>Crisis Care – 24 hour telephone service (08) 9223 1111 or free call 1800 199 008</p> <p>Western Australia Police 131 444 or 000 (emergencies only)</p> <p>Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800</p> <p style="text-align: center;">There is LEGAL PROTECTION for people who provide information to the Department of Communities 'in good faith'.</p> </div>
	<p>Other help and support services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Kids Helpline 1800 551 800 ▶ Family and Domestic Violence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women's Domestic Violence Helpline 1800 007 339 (free call) can provide counselling, guide safety planning and offer referrals for a refuge if necessary.

Process Details

	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Men's Domestic Violence Helpline 1800 000 599 (free call) can provide counselling and referrals for male perpetrators, as well as male victims of family and domestic violence.▶ Parent and Family Services▶ Family Support Network, local networks of integrated services that support families and young children at risk <p>All incidence or allegations relating to care and protection of children are reportable. Verbal reports must be followed up with a written Incident Report and any supporting documentation to the CEO as soon as practicable, and no more than 12 hours of becoming aware of the incidence.</p> <p>Where written photo permission is given. Visual images of a child taken and recorded for the purpose of monitoring the development of an enrolled child at the service, must not be provided to <u>any</u> person or removed from the child's records unless authorised by the CEO. Written consent from a parent does not apply to the taking or recording of a visual image by an Authorised Officer when exercising a power or performing a duty under the Children and Community Services Act.</p> <p><i>Refer to Process 4 - Reporting Abuse or Neglect</i></p>
3.	<p>Responding to a Child Disclosing Abuse</p> <p>When a child or young person tells you they are being abused or neglected, the most important things you can do are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Believe the child• Reassure the child that telling you was the right thing to do• Maintain a calm appearance• Find a quiet place to talk with the child• Be truthful• Listen to the child and let them take their time• Let the child use their own words to tell you what happened• Let the child know what you will do next• Do not confront the person alleged to be the abuser• Call the Department's district office nearest to where the child lives• Be respectful of the sensitive nature of the information and only discuss the child's situation with professionals who are dealing with the matter• If possible, write down what the child has said ensure the details are accurately captured including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Time, date and place of the disclosure- 'Word for word' what happened and what was said, including any actions that may have been taken.- Date of report and signature. <p><i>Refer to Process 4 - Reporting Abuse or Neglect</i></p>

Process Details

	Description
4.	<p>Reporting Abuse or Neglect</p> <p>Manager / Advisor will guide the notifier through each step of the reporting process, communicate and provide all documentation to the CEO.</p> <p>Immediate Concern</p> <p>Danger or life-threatening situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Telephone: Police immediately on 000. <p>Step 1 - Initial Report</p> <p>Within 12 hours of becoming aware of the incidence or allegation and given the situation at the time, determine the relevant Authority below to make the initial report:</p> <p>Concern for a Child's Wellbeing</p> <p>Department of Communities, contact the Central Intake Team on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Telephone: 1800 273 889 or▶ Email: cpduty@communities.wa.gov.au▶ You may be directed to submit a professional referral via this link: Professional Referral. <p>They will gather and record information that you provide and decide how best to respond. The type of information that the officer will gather includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Details about the child/young person and family- The reasons you are concerned- The immediate risk to the child- Whether or not the child or family has support- What may need to happen to make the child safe- Your contact details, so that the officer can call you to obtain further information if required or to provide feedback. <p>You do not need to have all the details about the child or family when you contact the Department.</p> <p>Crisis Care (After hours)</p> <p>Crisis Care provides after hours response to report concerns for a child's safety, wellbeing and information or referrals for people experiencing crisis.</p> <p>Contact Crisis Care on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Telephone: 1800 199 008 or (08) 9223 1111 (24 hour telephone service)

Process Details

Description

Mandatory Reporting

It is a legal requirement in Western Australia for doctors, nurses, midwives, **Teachers** (including TAFE lecturers), police officers, boarding supervisors and ministers of religion to [report all reasonable beliefs of child sexual abuse](#) to the Department of Communities.

- ▶ Online: <https://mandatoryreportingweb.communities.wa.gov.au>
- ▶ Email: If you are experiencing technical difficulties lodging a mandatory report online, please email mrs@communities.wa.gov.au to request a hard copy for completion
- ▶ Telephone: 1800 708 704
- ▶ Fax: (08) 6414 7316
- ▶ Post: Mandatory Reporting Service, PO Box 8146, PERTH BC, WA 6849

A mandatory report can be made verbally or in writing. If a verbal report is made, it must be followed by a written report within 12 hours.

Staged implementation of [Mandatory Reporter Groups](#) include proposed commencement of Early Childhood Workers from 1 November 2024.

Step 2 - Reporting requirements for Approved Education and Care Service

Within **24 hours** of making initial report, the Approved Provider / CEO or Nominated Supervisor must notify the Regulatory Authority by lodging report through the [NQA IT System](#) of any:

- Serious incidents
- Complaints
- Any incident or allegation that physical or sexual abuse of a child or children has occurred or is occurring while the child or children are being educated and cared for by the service.

In some cases, this may include sexualised behaviour involving children that fall within reporting requirements under other laws.

Note: not all sexual behaviour involving children poses a risk to their safety. It may be age-appropriate and expected sexualised behaviour.

Within **7 days** of becoming aware of a circumstance arising at the service which pose a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of children, the Approved Provider / CEO or Nominated Supervisor must notify the regulatory Authority by lodging report through the [NQA IT System](#).

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority - [Approved Provider reporting requirements about children in an education and care service](#)

Process Details

	Description
	<p data-bbox="310 275 1455 323">Step 3 - Additional Reporting Requirements</p> <p data-bbox="310 352 1455 394">Reportable Conduct Scheme, Western Australia</p> <p data-bbox="310 415 1455 583">Within 7 days of becoming aware of a reportable allegation or conviction, heads of organisations that exercise care, supervision or authority over children must notify the Ombudsman where there is allegations of, or convictions for, child abuse by their Employees. The Ombudsman will monitor, oversee and review these investigations.</p> <p data-bbox="310 617 1455 684">Reportable Conduct Notification Form must be completed by the Approved Provider / CEO online at:</p> <p data-bbox="310 701 1455 737">https://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/Reportable_Conduct/RCS-Notification-Form.htm</p> <p data-bbox="310 766 1455 833">Assistance with submitting a notification, please call the office of the Ombudsman on 9220 7471 or email ReportableConduct@ombudsman.wa.gov.au</p> <p data-bbox="310 873 1455 915">Teachers Registration Board of Western Australia (TRBWA)</p> <p data-bbox="310 932 1455 1062">The Approved Provider / CEO must notify TRBWA within 30 days of any investigation (ongoing or finalised) where an opinion is formed that a Teacher has engaged in serious misconduct or has been seriously incompetent, and that investigation results in that teacher:</p> <ul data-bbox="354 1071 1455 1142" style="list-style-type: none">- Being suspended or dismissed from working at the educational venue; or- Resigning from or no longer teaching at the educational venue. <p data-bbox="310 1180 1455 1215">TRBWA - Employer obligations: Notifying the Board</p> <p data-bbox="310 1245 1455 1312">To notify the Board, complete the Section 42 Notice from Employer Teacher Suspended, Dismissed or Resigned form and submit by:</p> <ul data-bbox="354 1329 1455 1505" style="list-style-type: none">▶ Email - icb@trb.education.wa.edu.au▶ Post - Investigations and Compliance Branch Teacher Registration Board of WA PO Box 3019 East Perth WA 6892 <p data-bbox="310 1530 1455 1598">Employers are protected from any civil liability as a result of providing this information to the Board.</p> <p data-bbox="310 1633 1455 1675">Working with Children Screening Unit (WWC)</p> <p data-bbox="310 1692 1455 1759">The Approved Provider / CEO must notify the WWC Screening Unit when becoming aware of any serious offences that an individual engaging in child-related work has.</p> <p data-bbox="310 1776 1455 1812">Class 1 and Class 2 Offences under the Working with Children (Screening) Act 2004</p> <p data-bbox="310 1837 1455 1873">Contact WWC Screening Unit (WA)</p> <ul data-bbox="354 1881 1455 1917" style="list-style-type: none">▶ Telephone: 1800 883 979

Process Details

	Description
	<p>Step 4 - Case Management</p> <p>The CEO will delegate a Manager or Advisor to manage the case, as a point of contact and to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- All reporting processes are followed- Records are complete and filed accordingly- Relevant support services are sourced and provided to children or adults involved in the case as required.- Further information is released or provided under the direction of Authorised Officers from relevant Governing Departments- The case is monitored until investigation is closed. <p>The CEO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Notify the Board of Governors as soon as practicable and- Sought legal representation as required.
5.	<p>Notifier Protection</p> <p>If you make a report or disclose relevant information to the Department, there is legislative protection for the notifier. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protection of identity – with some exceptions, your identity must not be disclosed without your consent. For further information, refer to section 240 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004.• Legal protection – you are not subject to legal liability under State law providing the information is provided in good faith.• Professional protection – authorised disclosure of information cannot be held to constitute unprofessional conduct or a breach of professional ethics. As a result, you cannot be disciplined by your professional body or incur any formal professional negative consequences at your workplace.

Associated Documents

Meerilinga Policy and Processes Manual

- Preface - Section 1 - Strategic and Business Planning
 - *Promoting Positive Childhoods*
 - *Meerilinga's Commitment to Child Safety*
 - *Code of Conduct*
 - *Code of Ethics*
 - *Compliance*
 - *Customer Service, Confidentiality and Privacy*
- Section 2 - Human Resources
 - *Workforce Planning*
 - *Recruitment and Selection*
 - *Appointment and Onboarding*
 - *Induction and Probation*

- *Performance Review*
- *Worker Professional Development*
- Section 3 - Finance and Administration Services
- Section 4 - Branding, Image and Reputation
 - *Social Media*
 - *Media*
- Section 6 - Children's Program
 - *Child Illness and Exclusion – Child Immunisation*
 - *Staffing*
 - *Enrolment and Orientation*
 - *Delivery and Collection of Children*
 - *Pets and Animals in the Environment*
 - *Relationships and Interactions with Children*
 - *Relationships and Partnerships with Families - Communication Plan*
 - *Complaint, Concern, Grievance*
 - *Incursion, Excursion and Transportation*
 - *Supervision*
 - *Sun Protection*
 - *Health, Hygiene and Infection Control*
 - *Toileting and Nappy Change*
 - *Medical Conditions*
 - *Medications*
- Section 7 - Workplace Health and Safety Policies
 - *Emergency Management*
 - *Environmental Protection*
 - *Reporting Accidents and Incidents*
 - *Workplace Health and Safety*
 - *Use and Storage of Dangerous Products*
 - *Safe Disposal of Dangerous Products*
 - *Infectious Disease Management*
- Section 8 - Guidelines

Guidelines for Manager, Advisors and Community Service Co-ordinators

- The Nominated Supervisor of the service and all appointed Responsible Persons in day-to-day charge of the service have completed an approved child protection training course at induction and annually thereafter.
- All workers including volunteers and students are:
 - Clear about their roles and responsibilities regarding child protection, including understanding Meerilinga policy and processes.
 - Aware of and recognise indicators of abuse, where a child may be at risk of significant of harm.
 - Aware of their obligations under the law to immediately report cases where they believe a child is at risk of significant harm.
- To provide training and development in child protection for all workers (including volunteers) and students.
- To provide educators with a reporting procedure and professional standards to safeguard children and protect the integrity of workers.
- Individuals employed or volunteering (including students) at Meerilinga have a current Working with Children Check unless the person meets the criteria for exemption from a WWCC.

- To provide access to relevant acts, regulations, standards and other resources to support workers to meet their obligations.
- Records of concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child or young adult, incidence or allegations of abuse or neglect are kept in line with our Privacy and Confidentiality Policy.
- As delegated by CEO, assume the role of managing a case. Ensure policy and processes are followed, including all steps for Reporting Abuse or Neglect.
- Conduct Child Safe Audit annually and report finding to the CEO for remedial or improvement actions.

Records Management

Title	Location	Responsible Officer	Minimum Retention Period
Police and National/State Governing Authorities Reports – Child Abuse or Neglect	CCS MTC Parenting	CEO / Manager / Delegated Advisor / Co-ordinator / Nominated Supervisor	Until a child (0-18 yrs) reaches an age of 25 years 7 years from the date of the record for adults
Notifications to Regulatory Authority	CCS	CEO / Co-ordinator / Nominated Supervisor	3 years
Insurance - Business - Public Liability - Workers Compensation - Personal Accident - Volunteers	Administration Services	Manager Finance and Operations / CEO	Ongoing for current year of business operation
Worker Employment Records - Qualification, WWC, NPC, First Aid, Declaration - Induction, Mandatory Training and Development - Performance Appraisal	Personnel	Worker / Personnel Administration Officer / Direct Reports / Nominated Supervisor	7 years after ceasing employment
Student Records Work Placement or Child Engagement - WWC - Child Protection Training (Meerilinga Services)	MTC	MTC Administration Officer / Advisor MTC / Trainers & Assessors	3 years from exit
Health and Safety Risk Assessment Plans	CCS	CEO / Co-ordinator / Nominated Supervisor	3 years
Enrolment Form Child – Custody	CCS MTC	Co-ordinator / Nominated Supervisor / Advisor Enrolment & Inclusion MTC Administration	3 years from exit
Children’s Health and Wellbeing Register	CCS	Co-ordinator / Nominated Supervisor	3 years

WHS Daily Schedule CCS	CCS	Co-ordinator / Nominated Supervisor	6 months
Medication Authorisation Form	CCS	Co-ordinator / Nominated Supervisor	3 years from exit
Medical Management Plan	CCS	Co-ordinator / Nominated Supervisor	3 years from exit
Risk Minimisation and Communication Plan	CCS	Co-ordinator / Nominated Supervisor	3 years from exit
Accident, Incident, Near Miss Report	CCS MTC Administration Parenting	All Workers and Students Direct Report	Child (0-18 yrs) reaches an age of 25 years Adult 7 years from the date of the record
Child Incident Report	CCS	Co-ordinator / Nominated Supervisor	Until the child is 25 years old
Quarterly Incident Report	CCS	Co-ordinator / Nominated Supervisor	3 years

Reference

- Education and Care Services National Law Act (WA) 2012
- Education and Care Services National Regulations (WA) 2012
- ACECQA - National Quality Standards
- ACECQA - Belonging, Being & Becoming - Early Years Learning Framework
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics 2016
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Code of Conduct - Meerilinga
- Children and Community Services Act 2004
- Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Amendment Act 2022
- Public Health Act 2016 (WA)
- Public Health Regulations 2017
- Privacy Act 1988, Privacy Principles
- Work Health and Safety Act 2020 (WA)
- Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022 (WA)
- Emergency Management Act 2005
- Australian Human Rights Commission - Child Safe Organisations.
<https://childsafefhumanrights.gov.au/>
- Government of Western Australia. Department of Communities. Child Protection. [Concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person](#)
- Government of Western Australia. [Department of Communities. Mandatory Reporting Guide: Western Australia. \(2023\).](#)
- NAPCAN - <https://www.napcan.org.au/napcan-brochures/>
- Ombudsman Western Australia. [Reportable Conduct Scheme.](#)
- Western Australia Commissioner for Children and Young People (CCYP) - [Child Safe Standards](#)
- WA Child Safety Services – Creating Safer Communities. [Protective Behaviours](#)

Definitions

Term	Definition
Approved Provider	A person who holds a provider approval.
Advisor	A person who is part of the Advisory team, each having specialised skills and knowledge in specific areas. Their role is to provide guidance and advice to assist Community Service Co-ordinators.
Nominated Supervisor	A person (Children's and Community Services Manager and Co-ordinators) with responsibility for the day to day management of an approved service. The Nominated Supervisor has a range of responsibilities under the Law and Regulations that govern the operation of education and care service.
Responsible Person	A person who is physically at the service and has the role of Nominated Supervisor or duly appointed person. The Responsible Person has consented to be placed in day to day charge of the Service but does not take on the responsibilities of the Nominated Supervisor rather they ensure the consistency and continuity in practices.

Mapping Policy and Processes

National Quality Standards Early Childhood 2020	QA1 - 1.1.1, 1.1.3, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 1.3.3 QA2 - 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3. QA3 - 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3. QA4 - 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2. QA5 - 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.2.1, 5.2.2 QA6 - 6.1.1, 6.1.2, 6.1.3, 6.2.1, 6.2.2. QA7 - 7.1.1, 7.1.2, 7.1.3, 7.2.1, 7.2.2, 7.2.3.
Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012	Section: 56, 56A, 161, 161A, 162, 162A, 165, 165A, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 182 -188, 189, 197, 199, 200, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208.
Education and Care Services National Regulations (WA) 2012	Regulation: 10, 12, 13, 16, 29, 31, 35, 73, 75, 77, 78, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102A-F, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 112, 113, 114, 115, 117ABC, 118, 120, 122, 123, 126, 130, 131, 132, 135, 136, 137, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 155, 156, 157, 158, 160, 161, 162, 167, 168(1)(2)(a-o), 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 180, 181, 183, 185.
Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015	S1, S7
National Standards for Volunteering Involvement 2015	S1, S5, S6, S8
Standards for Community Services 2007	S1, S4, S6, S10, S11
Standards to Family Support 2012	S1, S2, S3, S4, S9, S12, S13, S14