

Title	<b>Child Protection Policy</b>
Document Type	<b>POL - Policy</b>
Document Owner	<b>Rebecca Morse</b>
Directorate	<b>EET - Employment, Education and Training</b>
Date of Publication	<b>25/08/2023</b>
	Document Number <b>CA-POL-0008</b>

## 1 Purpose

All children have a right to be protected from harm, and schools and teachers owe a ‘duty of care’ to all students at Communicare Academy. Schools have a special responsibility to protect children when they are on school premises and to also intervene when they believe the safety and wellbeing of a child is at risk outside of the school.

The issue of child protection is to be considered alongside other Communicare Inc. policies (*Keeping Children and Young People Safe Policy*) and Academy specific policies (such as the *Staff Code of Conduct, Complaints and Feedback Policy, Bullying Policy, Behaviour Support Policy, and Mandatory Reporting Policy*) to ensure student safety and protection is upheld by the school to meet the requirements outlined by the various legislation and guidelines by which the Academy must subscribe.

The Department of Communities – Child Protection and Family Support, defines child abuse as maltreatment done by a person who has responsibility to care for a child. Notably, the definitions of child maltreatment described in this policy can be used to explain some of the behaviour that can occur in schools by one child to another. While the treatment of such behaviour may be dealt with through other school policies, such as Bullying or Behaviour Support, the victim of that maltreatment may display some of the physical and behavioural indicators as those described in the definitions of this policy. These events will be treated seriously by the school with the aim to help both parties.

This policy ensures all Communicare Academy staff are aware of their obligations under the *Children and Community Services Act 2004, WA School Education Act 1999, Non-Government Schools Registration Standards* and *National Child Safe Standards*, and the professional standards of relevant registered bodies, including, and how they apply to work conducted at the Academy. Academy staff decisions will be based on these policies, advice from the Police, Mandatory Reporting Service, Reportable Conduct Ombudsman, Department of Education, Teacher Registration Board, Department of Communities – Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS), or other relevant agencies.

## 2 Scope

This policy applies to students under the age of 18 years. Students over the age of 18 years are legally considered adults by the Department of Communities – Child Protection and Family Support and therefore do not fall under a child protection mandate. Acknowledging that students over the age of 18 years may still be vulnerable and in need of specialist services, Academy staff will still follow the Child Protection Policy for these students. In these cases, matters will be referred to the Police instead of CPFS for abuse related concerns.

This Policy applies to all Communicare Academy employees, volunteers, pre-service teachers, other placement students, and any other person conducting work at the Academy.

## Policy

### 2.1.1 Sexual Abuse

Where a staff member forms a belief that a student has been sexually abused, based on behaviours or interactions, or a student discloses directly to a staff member about sexual abuse, then that staff member will refer to the Mandatory Reporting Policy. All Academy staff must undertake *Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse – Grooming and Child Abuse Prevention* training by AISWA each year.

### 2.1.2 Other forms of Child Abuse

Any concerns regarding other forms of Child Abuse will be reported to CPFS using the Department's Concern Referral Form. Reports are made based on a disclosure, observation of indicators, or information received. It is advised that staff do this referral in conjunction with the Student Services Team

### 2.1.3 Reporting Process

Any beliefs or direct disclosures regarding Child Sexual Abuse must be reported on using the Mandatory Reporting Service as outlined in the *Mandatory Reporting Policy*.

For the reporting of other forms of Child Abuse the following points must be practiced:

- The Principal must be informed of a Concern Referral being filed regarding an Academy student.
- Once the Concern Referral has been filed with CPFS, staff members will need to record evidence of submission and save a copy of the report.
- Incidents that involve the possibility of criminal behaviour, or if the student is in immediate danger, the staff will seek advice from the Police, and CPFS, before informing parents, guardians, relatives or agencies.
- If it is believed to be in the best interests of the child to not file a Concern Referral at that stage, then this decision must be made in conjunction with the Wellbeing Manager. This would usually only be done if there was a belief that the child would be exposed to further ongoing abuse as a result of the guardian finding out about the Concern Referral before CPFS are able to take action. The Wellbeing Manager is best placed to advise on this decision and to create a support plan in the meantime. The Principal must then be informed and the final decision whether to report or not, rests with the Principal.

### 2.1.4 Safety Concerns

If a student discloses abuse while at school and there is immediate concern for their safety, then the Police must be informed. Academy staff cannot interfere with the custody of guardians. Should a guardian arrive at school to collect their child, Academy staff cannot physically prevent this from occurring. In this instance it is important that Police are informed immediately to ensure steps can be taken preventatively rather than reactively.

### 2.1.5 Students in Care

When students are in the care of the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Communities or have certain custodial arrangements or protection orders outlined by the Court, the school will abide by the orders and documents provided by CPFS.

In addition to the school's Individual Education Plan (IEP), students in care must also have a Documented Education Plan completed in their first term at the Academy. This is outlined in the *CPFS Documented Plan Policy*.

## 3 Responsibilities

### Academy Leadership Team

- Review the *Child Protection Policy* annually and implement any legislative updates.
- Maintain the *Child Protection Procedures* and ensure Academy staff are aware of the procedures.
- Ensure all Academy staff undertake the annual AISWA Child Protection training.
- Report notifiable incidents, within the timeline outlined, to the Director General of the Department of Education.
- Ensure iAlerts are submitted under the appropriate category and containing the relevant information.
- Ensure student wellbeing processes are regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with this policy.
- Provide ongoing Professional Learning to all staff on Child Protection matters.

### Academy Staff

- Report concerns or disclosures of Child Abuse as per this policy and the related procedure.
- Complete the annual AISWA training on Child Protection.
- Read and sign the Academy policy sign off document.
- File iAlerts as per the Academy iAlert procedure.

### Communicare Inc. Executive

- Review iAlerts regarding Child Abuse submitted by Academy staff in conjunction with this policy and associated procedures.

## 4 Abbreviations, Acronyms and Definitions

### Child Abuse and Neglect

This is maltreatment of a person under the age of 18 years. It is the result of action or inaction on the part of a person who has responsibility to care for a child, resulting in harm or injury to the child. The maltreatment experienced is normally described in five categories. Each category of maltreatment is described by a range of indicators.

### Physical Abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a child is severely and/or persistently hurt or injured by an adult or a child's caregiver. It may also be the result of putting a child at risk of being injured.

Some examples are:

- hitting, shaking, punching
- burning and scolding
- excessive physical punishment or discipline
- attempted suffocation
- shaking a baby.

Possible signs of physical abuse are:

- broken bones or unexplained bruises, burns, welts
- the child is unable to explain an injury or the explanation is vague

- dehydration or poisoning
- the child is unusually frightened of a parent or caregiver
- arms and legs are covered by clothing in warm weather
- when parents delay getting medical assistance for their child's injury
- brain damage through shaking or hitting.

## Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is exposed to, or involved in, sexual activity that is inappropriate to the child's age and developmental level.

It includes circumstances where the child has less power than another person involved, is exploited or where the child has been bribed, threatened, or coerced. It also includes situations where there is a significant difference between the developmental or maturity level of the child and another person involved. Some examples are:

- letting a child watch or read pornography
- allowing a child to watch sexual acts
- fondling the child's genitals
- having oral sex with a child
- vaginal or anal penetration
- using the internet to find a child for sexual exploitation.

Possible signs of sexual abuse include when a child:

- acts in a sexualised way that is inappropriate to his/her age
- creates stories, poems or artwork about abuse
- has pain, bleeding or swelling in his/her genital area
- starts doing things they have grown out of such as crying a lot, bed wetting or soiling, clinging to caregiver
- has nightmares or sudden unexplained fears
- has a sexually transmitted infection or is pregnant.

## Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when an adult harms a child's development by repeatedly treating and speaking to a child in ways that damage the child's ability to feel and express their feelings.

Some examples are:

- constantly putting a child down
- humiliating or shaming a child
- not showing love, support or guidance
- continually ignoring or rejecting the child
- exposing the child to family and domestic violence
- threatening abuse or bullying a child
- threats to harm loved ones, property or pets.

Possible signs of emotional abuse include when a child:

- is very shy, fearful or afraid of doing something wrong
- displays extremes of behaviour for example from being very aggressive to very passive
- is not able to feel joy or happiness

- is often anxious or distressed
- feels worthless about life and themselves
- has delayed emotional development.

## Neglect

Neglect is when children do not receive adequate food or shelter, medical treatment, supervision, care or nurturance to such an extent that their development is damaged, or they are injured.

Neglect may be acute, episodic or chronic. Some examples are:

- leaving a child alone without appropriate supervision
- not ensuring the child attends school, or not enrolling the child at school
- infection because of poor hygiene or lack of medication
- not giving a child affection or emotional support
- not getting medical help when required.

Signs of neglect in children include:

- untreated sores, severe nappy rash
- bad body odour, matted hair, dirty skin
- being involved in serious accidents
- being hungry and stealing food
- often being tired, late for school or not attending school
- feeling bad about themselves
- when a baby does not meet physical and development milestones without there being underlying medical reasons.

## 5 Related Documents/Legislation

Child Protection Procedures

Children and Community Services Act 2004

COR-POL-0084 Keeping Children and Young People Safe Policy

EDU-POL-0034 CPFS Documented Education Plan Policy

EDU-POL-0060 Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse Policy

National Child Safe Standards

Non-Government Schools Registration Standards

Reportable Incident Notification Form

WA School Education Act 1999

## 6 Appendices

Child Protection Procedure

## 7 Document Governance

Prepared by:	Rebecca Morse	Head of Teaching	21/03/2022
Approved for use by:	Sanchia Hall	Principal	25/08/2023
Date endorsed by the Board (only applicable to certain policies):			
Summary of change from last revision (n/a if first time issued):	Edits to definitions as requested by registration process.		