

## **Child Protection Policy and Procedure**

Interchange Outer East is a child safe organisation upholding the right of children to be free from abuse. All people involved with Interchange have the right to feel safe and supported during their involvement with the organisation.

Child abuse includes, but is not exclusive to:

- **Emotional/psychological**

When children do not receive the love, affection or attention they need to feel good about themselves or develop properly. Constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, yelling and rejection are all examples of emotional and psychological abuse.

- **Neglect**

When a child or young person's basic need for food, housing, health care and warm clothing are not met. Also being forced to live with family violence between adults in a child's home is harmful to children.

- **Physical**

A parent or carer physically injures a child intentionally. This is illegal and includes hitting, shaking, throwing, burning and biting. It also includes giving children and young people harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol or poison. Certain types of punishment, whilst not causing injury can also be considered physical abuse if they place a child at risk of being hurt, for example, locking a child outside in cold weather.

- **Sexual**

An adult or someone bigger or older involves a child or young person in any sexual activity. This may include kissing, touching genitals or breasts, oral sex or intercourse. Encouraging a child or young person to view any pornographic material is also sexual abuse.

This policy applies to children and young people who are involved with Interchange Outer East. However, Interchange Outer East is aware that at times, individuals with a disability may be more vulnerable to physical, intellectual or communication challenges. Therefore, everyone involved within Interchange Outer East has a responsibility to ensure the protection and safety of people with a disability is still upheld, regardless of their age. It is applicable to all staff, participants, volunteers, families and visitors when they are engaged within Interchange Outer East. This is also applicable to all Interchange Outer East locations and when Interchange staff, participants and volunteers are accessing the community through their involvement with Interchange. Further, the policy also applies to any Interchange staff member working within a family home or environment.

Every child, young person and vulnerable adult has the right to live in an environment that fosters his or her physical, emotional, social, educational and spiritual development. From an Interchange child protection perspective, this entails stopping abuse and neglect when it has occurred, and preventing future abuse and neglect from occurring. This also entails ensuring that every child is provided with a sense of security.

It is imperative to report child abuse, because some children don't have the voice to speak for themselves, and it's important to help keep them safe by following up any noticed / suspected abuse signs. Child abuse is a contributing factor in youth suicide, crime, homelessness, mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse and unemployment in young people and adults. As people with a disability may be more vulnerable, it is even more important to give them a voice and protect them where possible. If abuse is not reported on, it is likely that it will continue. This leads to a higher risk of the child / young person / vulnerable adult being in jeopardy of falling into one of the above categories in the future.

If you suspect child abuse, trust your judgment and report it to an IOE coordinator, Team Leader or General Manager. You can report any suspicions you might have anonymously, and don't have to have proof to report it. Any staff member, participant, support worker or volunteer who feels that a child, young adult or vulnerable adult is being abused in any way, or feels uncomfortable or unsure about a situation where abuse may have occurred / is occurring, should seek confidential help and advice from Department of Human Services Intake Unit Ph: 1300 360 391.

There are some signs that may alert you to the possibility that a child is being abused:

- A child or young person tells you that he or she is being abused or hurt.
- You notice sudden or unexplained changes in mood or behaviour of a child or young person.
- You notice frequent or unexplained bruises or injuries on a child or young person.
- You see a child or young person with low self-esteem.
- You see a child or young person with poor hygiene.
- You notice that a child or young person becomes withdrawn or unresponsive.
- You notice a child or young person with increased exaggerated fears.
- You notice that a child or young person seems to lack trust in familiar adults.
- You notice that a child or young person has serious difficulties relating to peers and / or adults.
- You see a child or young person who is always angry or aggressive.
- You find out that a child or young person has difficulty sleeping and experiences nightmares.
- You notice a child or young person experiences a change in eating patterns.

If a child comes to you to disclose abuse, reassure them they have done the right thing, and that you believe them. Stress to them that what has happened is not their fault. Make sure that you don't make promises that you can't keep, or push the child/vulnerable adult into giving details of the abuse. Your job is to listen and support the child as best you can and ensure their safety.

Reasonable grounds to report are:

- A child or young person discloses that he or she has suffered or is suffering non

accidental physical injury or sexual abuse.

- Someone else advises you that a child or young person has been sexually abused or non- accidentally injured.
- Your own observations of the child or young person's physical condition or behaviours led you to reasonably suspect that the child or young person has suffered or is suffering non- accidental physical injury or sexual abuse.

If you suspect abuse, or someone has disclosed abuse to you,

report it to: Office-based staff:

- Team Leader
- General Manager
- CEO

Program-based staff:

- Program coordinator

You may also call Child Protective Services:

**Intake Unit Eastern**  
**Region Ph: 1300 360 391**  
**Box Hill: (03) 9843 6000**