



# Independent Institute

*A flexible and innovative approach to industry training and development*

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

To recognise appropriate contact with clients under the age of 18 IIFP requires that all personnel in IIFP are mandated notifiers. Mandated notifiers include anyone who works with or cares for children in a paid or voluntary capacity by providing children with health, welfare, education, child care or residential services. Such people are legally obliged to notify the Department of Family & Youth Services (FAMILIES SA) if, in the course of their paid or voluntary work, they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child has been or is being abused or neglected. Although mandated notifiers have a legal responsibility to notify, everyone has a moral responsibility to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

All IIFP personnel (ie all teachers and all education support officers and volunteers), involved in or associated with the delivery of educational, health, welfare, child care or residential care services should participate in a training course for mandated notifiers of suspected child abuse.

The Children's Protection Act (SA) 1993 and its Regulations are the relevant legislative documents relating to the issue of child abuse.

IIFP is required to observe the agreed practices laid out in 'Child Protection: Interagency Guidelines' (1997)

When any IIFP officer and other contracted personnel, including volunteers, have suspicions of child abuse, these procedures are to help them carry out their obligations under the Act.

### CHILDREN'S PROTECTION ACT

Under Section 11 (1) & (2) of the Children's Protection Act 1993 principals, teachers and other school personnel (including volunteers) are obliged by law to notify FAMILIES SA if they suspect on reasonable ground that a child (ie. person under eighteen years of age) has been or is being abused or neglected. IIFP has adopted this principle when any officer has contact with any individual under 18 years of age.

### RECOGNITION OF ABUSE

The term 'abuse' refers to sexual, physical, emotional psychological abuse and neglect.

The following definitions are used by FAMILIES SA in determining whether child abuse has occurred.

Physical abuse: Any non accidental act inflicted upon a child which results in physical injury to the child.

Sexual abuse: Any sexual behaviour imposed on a child.

Emotional abuse: A chronic attitude or behaviour directed at a child, or, a creation of an emotional environment, which is detrimental to or impairs the child's psychological and/or physical development.

Neglect: Neglect refers to any serious omission or commission by a person that jeopardises or impairs the child's psychological, intellectual or physical development.

### LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

It is important to remember that it is not the role of IIFP personnel to prove that abuse occurred. It is the role of FAMILIES SA to determine whether abuse occurred.

The Law requires school personnel to report reasonable suspicions of abuse. School personnel have reasonable grounds to suspect abuse and to contact FAMILIES SA when:

- a child tells you them he or she has been abused;
- a child tells them he or she knows someone who has been abused (a child could possibly be referring to himself or herself);
- someone else tells them (eg. sibling, relative, friend, neighbour, or acquaintance of the child) that a child has been abused;

- their own observations of the child's physical condition and/or behaviour lead them to suspect that the child has been abused;
- other circumstances lead them to suspect that a child has been abused.

If in doubt IIFP personnel are advised to consult the FAMILIES SA Central Intake Team – Child Abuse Report Line (Ph 131478) .

Notifying suspected abuse can be the first step in helping both the abused child and the adult causing the abuse.

There is no civil or criminal liability for notifying in good faith a suspicion of abuse.

There is a penalty of \$2,000 (max fine) for failure to report (section 11 (1) (b)).

## NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES

- 1 To consult and make a notification, phone the Child Abuse Report Line on 131478 as soon as possible.
- 2 This is a 24 hour, 7 day a week line and can be rung from anywhere in the state for the cost of a local call.
- 3 The calls will be received by the Central Intake Team workers during business hours. At all other times the line is operated by Crisis Care staff.
- 4 Under Section 11(3) of the Children's Protection Act, 1993, the school personnel making notification will be required to provide authorities "a statement of the observations, information and opinions upon which the suspicion is based". This can be done verbally.
- 5 When making a notification, personnel must advise:
  - the child/young person's name, age and address
  - the reason for suspecting that the injury to, or behaviour of, or the condition of the child/young person is the result of abuse or neglect
  - the notifier's assessment of immediate danger to the child or young person (information may be sought about the whereabouts of the alleged abuser/s)
  - what arrangements, if any, exist for the care and protection of the child/young person
  - what involvement, if any, other agencies have in dealing with the abuse or neglect issues
  - the notifier's description of the injury, the behaviour or condition observed
  - the current whereabouts of the child/young person.
  - (the notifier is not required to have all of the above information in order to make a notification)
- 6 The onus to notify FAMILIES SA rests with the person who suspects abuse. It is recommended that school personnel advise the principal when making a FAMILIES SA notification.
- 7 Following the FAMILIES SA investigation a number of interventions may occur, including, for example:
  - counselling for the family and/or individual
  - referral to other agencies
  - emergency foster care to relieve the immediate stress on the family and remove the risk to the child
  - the service of a parent aide (trained volunteer)
  - practical assistance eg. help with housing, finance, child care
  - an assessment that the student is safe and hence no further action.
- 8 In all cases of sexual abuse, serious physical abuse, or serious neglect, the Police and the FAMILIES SA consult to determine the respective roles of the two departments.
- 9 FAMILIES SA gives priority to child protection matters.