

# **SHARP**

## **Child Protection Procedures**

SHARP is committed to the prevention of physical, verbal, emotional and sexual abuse and to the protection of children from adults and other children. This commitment means that the interests and welfare of the child are the prime considerations when any decision is made about suspected abuse.

SHARP supports the roles of the Police and Child, Youth and Family Services (Section 15 of the CYFs and Family Act) in the investigation of suspected abuse and will report suspected abuse to these agencies. We will refer families needing support and counsel to appropriate Counselling Medical Centres.

When appropriate, SHARP will consult with CYFS and other agencies that have specialist knowledge and resources. We do not assume responsibility beyond the level of our own Expertise.

1. SHARP Staff will watch children for behaviour, play and language that cause concern in terms of possible neglect or abuse.
2. All staff and Volunteers will receive in house training in recognising indicators of abuse
3. Volunteers and Supervisors must report any suspicious of abuse to the Supervisor, Coordinator or Manager or they may make a report to the police or Child, Youth and Family. The Manager is then required to report to CYFs or refer to the Police. The Volunteer/Supervisor will only listen carefully and not ask any questions of the child. The conversation is to be recorded, dated and signed.
4. The Coordinator will notify the Manager, who will notify the SHARP Board. A record will be kept outlining likely indications of abuse (date, time, signs, e.g. bruises, conversations/ disclosures, etc) (see "Report on Care and Protection of a Child or Young Person"- Appendix 3). Each entry shall be countersigned. Only the Coordinator and Management will be privy to the report and it will be kept in a locked cupboard in the office which is locked when unattended. If not substantiated the record will be destroyed.
5. The Manager and SHARP Board will consult with the appropriate agencies to ensure the safety and support of the staff, children and families involved. If it is suspected that a child might be unsafe SHARP is committed to making a report to the Police or CYFS. It is also recognised that any person has the right to report suspected abuse directly to CYFS or the police if they feel the child's immediate safety is in danger. SHARP staff will not assume responsibility beyond their level of expertise.
6. Where Staff is suspected of abusing a child an internal investigation will be carried out by the Manager and Chairperson of the SHARP Trust. The Staff member concerned will be suspended until the investigation is complete. If necessary the information will be passed onto the Police.
7. SHARP Trust will always act in the best interests of the child, not the organisation. Any staff member involved in an investigation will be offered independent support from someone outside the SHARP Trust.

8. Staff will be advised of their rights to seek independent legal advice.
9. Confidentiality will be respected in all areas of the investigation. Volunteer/ job applicants work history and police record will be checked, with the applicants consent, prior to their appointment.
10. In choosing Staff we require skills and attributes that will enhance the children's development and safety.
11. On employment of staff, reference should be made by the Coordinator to the disciplinary procedures in their Individual Employment Agreement.
12. The police records of all volunteers/ staff aged 17 or older will be checked every two years for the duration of their employment/ service.
13. SHARP will ensure that the Volunteers, Supervisors and other adults are well supervised. Children will not leave the programme with anyone other than those nominated on the Childs enrolment form, unless photo identification matches a name given by the parent/ caregiver or they present a security tag or in the case of an emergency.
14. SHARP has established rules about acceptable touching of children.
15. SHARP makes parents welcome at any time. If parents have concerns about the treatment of a child by our Staff they are encouraged to make these known to the Coordinator who will ensure the matter is investigated and acted on, using an advisor from outside the service if this is necessary.
16. Adult visitors to the SHARP sites will be supervised by a Staff member at all times and are required to wear a 'SHARP pass' (visitor tag) around their neck.