

POLICY DOCUMENT



Child & Youth Risk Management Strategy

| | |
|--|---|
| Document name: | Child & Youth Risk Management Strategy 4006.6 |
| Management Committee approval date: | 13/10/2023 |
| Review period: | 1year |
| Review date: | 12/10/2024 |

| | |
|--|---|
| Policy context: This policy relates to: | |
| Human Services Quality Framework | <p>Standard 4 - Safety, Well-being and Rights</p> <p><i>Indicator 2:</i> The organisation proactively prevents, identifies and responds to risks to the safety and well-being of people using services</p> <p><i>Indicator 3:</i> The organisation has processes for reporting and responding to potential or actual harm, abuse and/or neglect that may occur for people using services.</p> |
| Other standards | |
| Legislation or other requirements | <p><i>Community Services Act 2007</i></p> <p><i>Child Protection Act 1999</i></p> <p><i>Public Guardian Act 2014</i></p> <p><i>Family and Child Commission Act 2014</i></p> <p><i>Right to Information Act 2009</i></p> <p><i>Information Privacy Act 2009</i></p> <p><i>Public Records Act 2002</i></p> <p><i>Human Rights Act (QLD) 2019</i></p> <p><i>Child Protection Reform Amendment Act 2014</i></p> <p><i>Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000</i></p> <p><i>Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011</i></p> <p><i>Criminal Code Act 1899</i></p> <p><i>Service Agreements</i></p> <p><i>Intensive Family Support Model and Guidelines</i></p> <p><i>Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy Toolkit</i></p> <p><i>Cultural Safety: Child Safety Practice Manual</i></p> <p><i>Cultural Practice Framework</i></p> <p><i>Understanding and Applying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle</i></p> <p><i>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</i></p> <p><i>Our way – A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017-2037</i></p> |

1. Purpose: Why do we have a child and youth risk management policy?

This policy describes how we ensure a safe and supportive service environment where children and young people can receive services that contribute to their development and wellbeing. The policy satisfies the eight minimum requirements of the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011 to help identify potential risks of harm to children and young people and to implement strategies to minimise these risks.

2. Scope

This policy will apply to all clients, personnel and services of Mareeba Community Centre.

3. Policy Statement: Our commitment

A child centred approach is critical to all Mareeba Community Centre service delivery and within this approach the safety of children is paramount.

Mareeba Community Centre is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people at all times. We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns must be treated very seriously and, in a manner, consistent with our policies and procedures. In line with our legal and moral obligations to children and young people, we communicate with relevant authorities when we have significant concerns regarding imminent risk about a child's safety

Mareeba Community Centre is committed to upholding and protecting the key human rights of children and young people and providing services which assist them to grow and develop in positive, supportive and empowering families who are well connected to support systems such as extended family, friends, community groups and support services.

Mareeba Community Centre is committed to providing a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe and accessible environment for children with a disability.

Specifically, we will:

- implement a *Code of Conduct* that includes conduct required when interacting with children and young people
- document safe recruitment procedures, and regularly train and educate staff on child abuse risks
- document procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines
- plan for managing breaches of the *Code of Conduct*
- manage compliance with the *Working with Children Blue Card System*
- develop risk management plans for high-risk activities and special events
- implement strategies for communication and support
- undertake annual reviews of the policy and update all staff of amendments
- provide annual child protection training for all staff
- promote and abide by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- incorporate the five core elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles (prevention, partnership, placement, participation & connection) in all aspects of our service delivery.

4. Procedures

4.1 Code of Conduct for interacting with children and young people

Mareeba Community Centre has a Code of Conduct that all staff are required to commit to and this includes the standards of behaviour required when interacting with children or young people. This code is detailed in Policy 6008 Code of Conduct.

Policy 6008 Code of Conduct also records procedures for the management of breaches of the Mareeba Community Centre Code of Conduct.

4.2 Procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing staff and volunteers

Policy 6001 Employee Recruitment and Policy 6002 Volunteer Selection detail the procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing staff and volunteers. These procedures include processes which aim to ensure the safety, protection and wellbeing of children.

4.3 Responding to disclosures or suspicions of harm

The nature of Mareeba Community Centre services is such that staff will be confronted with suspicions, disclosures or knowledge of harm to children and young people. The practice procedures for each service give consideration to this.

Harm is defined as 'any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing'. Harm can be caused by physical, psychological, or emotional abuse or neglect; or sexual abuse or exploitation (section 9 of the *Child Protection Act 1999*).

Considerations when forming a reasonable suspicion about harm to a child include:

- whether there are detrimental effects on the child's body or the psychological state or emotional state that are evident to the person, or that the person considers are likely to become evident in the future, and
- in relation to any detrimental effects mentioned above their nature and severity, and the likelihood that they will continue, and
- the child's age (section 13C of the *Child Protection Act 1999*).

A **disclosure of harm** occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen to a child.

A **suspicion of harm** is when someone has a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering, or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering, significant harm. This includes circumstances which relate to an unborn child who may be in need of protection after he or she is born. A child who has been, or may be experiencing, abuse may show behavioural, emotional or physical signs of stress and abuse.

All Mareeba Community Centre staff must abide by the new inclusions to the Criminal Code Act 1899 which specifically includes *Section 229BB Failure to protect child from child sexual offence* and *Section 229BC Failure to report belief of child sexual offence committed in relation to child*.

If any Mareeba Community Centre staff member believes a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation, they should **immediately** contact the Queensland Police Service by dialling **000**.

When a Mareeba Community Centre staff member is confronted with suspicions, disclosures or knowledge of harm to children and young people they should discuss this with their supervisor and follow the procedures outlined in Section 4.1 of Policy 4005 – Harm Response.

4.4 Compliance with the Working with Children Blue Card System

All Mareeba Community Centre staff, volunteers and Committee Members, are required to have a current *Working with Children Blue Card* before commencing with the organisation.

The Manager and the Operations Coordinator are the contact people responsible for managing *Blue Cards*.

The contact person must:

- ensure all information kept in relation to blue card applications, renewals, notifications, negative notices, changes in *Blue / Exemption Card* status and changes of police information is kept confidential
- ensure all applicants to relevant job positions advertised are notified of the requirement to hold a current *Blue Card*
- notify all applicants that by applying online or signing the application form they are consenting to the screening process under the Act
- be able to certify that they have sighted documents to confirm an employee's identity
- carefully check through the application form to ensure all sections have been appropriately completed
- be aware that employees must not commence with Mareeba Community Centre in any capacity until they hold a valid *Blue Card* and positive notice
- explicitly warn all potential staff (paid employees, volunteers and students) that it is an offence for a 'disqualified person' to apply for or renew a *Blue Card* online or by completing an application / renewal form
- manage the *Blue Card Services Organisation Portal* and maintain a *Blue Card Register* of all Mareeba Community Centre staff.
- link all paid and voluntary staff (including Management Committee) to the organisation, via the portal
- ensure Management Committee members are recorded by Blue Card Services, as business owners
- ensure that individuals understand their obligation to advise if there is a change in their police information; and that, if such advice is received, Mareeba Community Centre will not continue to employ the person unless they have submitted a 'Change in police information' form to the Agency
- notify the Agency if an applicant or Blue Card holder stops working for it via the Organisation Portal
- notify the Agency if the contact person for the organisation changes.

If any Mareeba Community Centre staff member has a *Blue Card* cancelled or suspended, receives a negative notice, has their *Blue Card* application withdrawn or receives notification in relation to a serious change in criminal history, Mareeba Community Centre must ensure that the person is immediately removed from their role.

All *Blue Card* holders are obligated to:

- update their details within 14 days of any changes (including postal address, employment circumstances, personal information – such as name change and if they stop working in child-related employment),
- advise *Blue Card Services* of all regulated child-related work for which they are using their *Blue Card*,
- advise *Blue Card Services* of the loss or theft of their card within 14 days,
- immediately notify Mareeba Community Centre if there is a change in their police information and

- not apply for, start or continue in regulated child-related work if their *Blue Card* is suspended or cancelled. Furthermore, *Blue Card* holders are obligated to immediately return their positive notice letter and card to Blue Card Services.

4.5 Development of Risk Management Plans for high-risk activities and special events

Policy 1010 Risk Management, details Mareeba Community Centre's commitment to identifying and managing risk which may arise as part of the delivery of services.

Policy 4004 Harm Prevention outlines the actions we take in order to prevent harm occurring to our clients and how we assess the risk of harm.

4.6 Managing breaches of the Risk Management Plan

Policy 4005 Harm Response, details our commitment to protecting the safety and wellbeing of our clients at all times, and responding promptly and appropriately to allegations of actual or potential harm arising out of our service or disclosed to our service.

The Policy also documents the procedures for suspected risk of harm from child abuse or neglect where the suspected source of harm is Mareeba Community Centre and the necessary steps for managing critical incidents.

4.7 Strategies for Communication and Support

An effective strategy for communication and support will:

- ensure that all Mareeba Community Centre staff are aware of their responsibilities and understand what acceptable behaviour is for interacting with children
- enable people to feel comfortable addressing issues of concern
- highlight the importance of our commitment to protecting the safety and wellbeing of children in the service environment, and
- reduce the likelihood of breaches of *Code of Conduct* and policies.

MCC uses the following communication strategies:

- induction covering all policies and procedures, signed *Code of Conduct* and a commitment to engage in regular child safety training with the Family Programs Coordinator
- *Client Charter* that is displayed in reception foyer in poster form and a copy given to all consenting clients of Mareeba Community Centre
- regular and structured meetings that involve all staff and volunteers - discussions in these meetings will also take place in relation to any new or updated information concerning child safety legislation / practices
- regular reporting to the Management Committee
- training for Management Committee members, employees and volunteers in relevant policies, procedures and work practices
- supervision, professional development and staff appraisals
- involvement of Management Committee members, employees, volunteers and service users in the continuous improvement process
- involvement of Management Committee, employees, volunteers, service users and stakeholders in the planning process
- emails and memos to staff as required
- letters and notices to service users as required
- provision of information to service users as part of service delivery
- reporting/participation in service networks or collaborative groups.

5. Other related policies and procedures

| Documents related to this policy | |
|--|---|
| <i>Related policies</i> | 1005 Vision Statement 1005 Statement of Values 1010 Risk Management 1014 Performance Monitoring and Reporting Policy 1015 Continuous Improvement 1016 Work Health and Safety – General 1017 Work Health and Safety – Emergencies 1018 Regulatory Compliance 1019 Privacy 1020 Confidentiality 1021 Participation 4001 Client records 4002 Client Service Charter 4002 New Clients Welcome Pack Contents List 4003 Access to Confidential Information 4004 Harm Prevention 4005 Harm Response 6001 Employee Recruitment 6002 Volunteer Selection 6003 Staff and Volunteer Induction Checklist 6008 Code of Conduct |
| <i>Forms or other organisational documents</i> | Management Committee Performance Appraisal Tool Management Committee Induction Checklist Strategic Plan 2020-2025 Conflict of Interest Declaration Form Organisational Training Register Staff Performance Review Template Blue Card Register Position Descriptions |

6. Review processes

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>Policy review frequency:</i> Every year | <i>Responsibility for review:</i> Manager |
| <p><i>Review process:</i></p> <p>The policy will undergo a review process using the Power Apps system, which automates review reminders and streamlines the approval process. The Manager will review the policy in consultation with other service providers, clients, staff, volunteers, and the Management Committee. Any recommended changes will be tabled for Management Committee approval.</p> | |
| <p><i>Documentation and communication:</i></p> <p>Approved policies are stored in the SharePoint library and accessible for all staff. Staff will be informed of and required to review all changes as they occur.</p> | |
| <p><i>Record of Policy Revisions:</i></p> <p><i>Version 4006.1</i> (adopted 13th May 2019)</p> <p><i>Version 4006.2</i> (adopted 19th August 2020) – reference that Policy must be reviewed annually, expanded and updated Section 4.4 including new Blue Card requirements</p> <p><i>Version 4006.3</i> (adopted 21st October 2020) – included references to Understanding and Applying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, included Managing breaches of the Risk Management Plan</p> <p><i>Version 4006.4</i> (adopted 23rd November 2021) – minor text amendments to section 4.4 Compliance with</p> | |

the Working with Children Blue Card System and 4.7 Strategies for Communication and Support
Version 4006.5 (adopted 19th May 2022) – Additions to Legislation or other requirements, additions to Statement of Commitment referring to cultural safety, 4.4 Compliance with the Working with Children Blue Card System and 4.3 Responding to disclosures or suspicions of harm. 2023 – Minor changes including new policy template and new form ID numbers in S5.
Version 4006.6 (adopted 13th October 2023) – Added legislation relevant to IFS guidelines 2023 in first table; business owner linking in 4.4; transferred to new template.