

Child Protection Policy - Small Talk Therapy

Updated October 2024

Applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, and partners.

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the commitment of Small Talk Therapy to ensure the safety and well-being of all children in our care or with whom we engage through our services. Our objective is to create a safe and supportive environment where children are respected, protected, and empowered.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors, and any other representatives who work with children or come into contact with them through our services.

3. Guiding Principles

- **Children's Safety Comes First:** The well-being and safety of children are paramount.
 - **Zero Tolerance of Abuse:** Any form of abuse or neglect is unacceptable.
 - **Child-Centered Practice:** Children's voices are valued, and they have the right to participate in decisions affecting them.
 - **Compliance with Legislation:** This policy aligns with New Zealand's **Children's Act 2014**, **Oranga Tamariki Act 1989**, and other relevant laws.
 - **Cultural Sensitivity:** Respect for cultural identity, with specific acknowledgment of the principles of the **Treaty of Waitangi**, including protection of Māori children's rights.
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4. Definition of Child Abuse and Neglect

- **Physical Abuse:** Deliberate harm to a child's body.
 - **Emotional Abuse:** Behavior that harms a child's emotional well-being or sense of self-worth.
 - **Sexual Abuse:** Any form of sexual activity or behavior involving a child.
 - **Neglect:** Failing to provide for a child's basic physical, emotional, or developmental needs.
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5. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Management:**
 - Ensure all staff are familiar with this policy.
 - Conduct appropriate vetting through police checks and interviews under the **Children's Act 2014**.
 - Provide training in child protection and safeguarding practices.

- **Employees, Volunteers, and Contractors:**
 - Always act in the best interests of children.
 - Report any suspicions, concerns, or disclosures of abuse following the procedures outlined in this policy.
 - Adhere to all professional and ethical standards related to working with children.
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6. Recruitment and Vetting Procedures

- All new staff, volunteers, and contractors who work with children must undergo a **New Zealand Police vetting process**.
 - References from previous employers or supervisors working in child-related roles must be obtained.
 - All employees and volunteers are required to complete child protection training upon induction and annually thereafter.
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7. Code of Conduct

All representatives of Small Talk Therapy are expected to:

- Treat children with respect and dignity at all times.
 - Listen to children and encourage their participation.
 - Avoid being alone with a child unless necessary and appropriate.
 - Use positive and constructive methods of discipline.
 - Refrain from physical punishment or any behavior that may harm a child.
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8. Reporting Concerns and Disclosure

- If a staff member suspects child abuse or receives a disclosure from a child, they must report it immediately to the **Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO)**.
- The DCPO will assess the concern and, if necessary, report it to **Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children** and/or **New Zealand Police**.
- In emergencies where a child is in immediate danger, the staff member must call 111.

Confidentiality: Reports of abuse will be handled confidentially, with information shared only with those involved in the investigation or response.

9. Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO)

Fiona Kenworthy is the DCPO. The DCPO is responsible for:

- Leading the response to child protection concerns.
- Liaising with external agencies, including Oranga Tamariki and the police.

- Keeping records of all reported concerns and actions taken.
 - Providing advice and support to staff on child protection issues.
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10. Training and Professional Development

- All employees, volunteers, and contractors will receive child protection training during induction and through annual refreshers.
 - Staff will be informed of updates to the policy and changes in relevant laws or procedures.
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11. Managing Allegations Against Staff

- Any allegations of misconduct involving children against staff members will be taken seriously and managed promptly.
 - The staff member may be suspended or assigned to non-contact duties while an investigation is conducted.
 - Investigations will involve consultation with **Oranga Tamariki** and **New Zealand Police**, as required.
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12. Safe Environment

Small Talk Therapy is committed to:

- Ensuring safe spaces for children to participate in activities.
 - Regularly assessing risks to prevent harm.
 - Promoting an inclusive environment that respects children's backgrounds, identities, and abilities.
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13. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

- Records of child protection concerns will be kept securely and only shared with appropriate parties.
 - Documentation will follow the company's data privacy policies and relevant New Zealand laws.
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14. Monitoring and Review


This policy will be reviewed annually or after any significant incident to ensure it remains current with New Zealand law and best practices.

15. Contact Information for External Agencies

- Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children: 0508 326 459
 - New Zealand Police (Emergency): 111
 - New Zealand Police (Non-Emergency): 105
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Approval and Acknowledgment

This policy has been approved by the management of Fiona Kenworthy. All staff, volunteers, and contractors must read, understand, and comply with this policy.

Signature:  _____
Fiona Kenworthy, 13.10.2024

This policy aims to reflect a proactive approach toward child safety, ensuring that all those working with children are aware of their responsibilities and committed to maintaining the highest standards of care.