

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Effective from 30 June 2006



## Preamble:

'Every child has the right to protection from harm'. *Child Protection Act 1999, section 5(a)*.

The term '**harm**' is defined in the *Child Protection Act 1999, section 9*, as being any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional well-being. It is immaterial how the harm was caused.

The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount. *Child Protection Act 1999, section 5(b)*.

Under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, the identity of individuals who notify the Department of Child Safety or the Police Service of their concerns about a child is confidential and they are protected from civil liability.

The staff member cannot be held to have breached any code of professional etiquette or ethics, or departed from accepted standards of professional conduct merely because the said person gives the notification or information.

The Child Protection Act contains specific provisions for authorized officers of the Department of Child Safety and Police Officers to investigate allegations of child abuse and to assess the child's need of protection.

If you suspect, or are made aware that a child has experienced harm, or may be at risk of experiencing harm then you must act.

## Statement of Commitment

SCISCO Career Pathways is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who use its services. Our employees will treat them with respect and understanding at all times. To ensure children and young people are kept safe from harm, the following actions will be taken: ~

SCISCO Career Pathways will take all reasonable steps to help prevent child abuse and neglect including:

- Encouragement and support of staff, care providers and parents to attend child abuse prevention programs and in-service training;
- Appropriate education for children about personal safety and how to maintain it;
- Maintenance of good working relationships and consultation with professionals working in child protection;
- Publicity of the commitment of all programs to child abuse prevention;
- Timely investigation and response to any suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

## Who must comply with this policy?

- Employees
- Volunteers
- The management committee

## Responding and reporting

- Believing a child in the event of disclosure of abuse or neglect;
- Recording observations, impressions and communications of the child suspected of being abused or neglected objectively and accurately;
- Reporting suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate statutory authority;

- Convening a meeting with Director, Community Services and/or Executive Director;
- Taking appropriate action as advised, if consultation indicates that the situation does not warrant formal investigation (e.g. ongoing monitoring of the situation with maintenance of appropriate records);
- Where an allegation of abuse against a staff member, carer or a member of the carer's family results in investigation by the Department of Child Safety or by the Police Service, the staff member/carer will be suspended pending the outcome of the investigation;
- Unless otherwise indicated, the most senior staff member of a program will be the person to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate statutory authorities and to determine the strategy for informing all parties;
- If there is an immediate risk to the child, the staff member concerned should take action to ensure the immediate safety of the child. If possible, this should be done with the support and prior approval of the most senior staff member of a program;
- Referring children, families and staff involved in the reporting or investigation of allegations of child abuse or neglect for appropriate support.

The government agencies that investigate harm to children are the Department of Child Safety and the Queensland Police Service. When a call is made to a Child Safety Service Centre or to Police, the officer taking the call will gather as much information as possible from the caller and decide how best to respond.

The initial information the officers will require is:

- the name, age and address of the child/ren;
- the reasons you suspect the child or young person may have experienced or is at risk of experiencing harm;
- the immediate risk to the child; and
- your contact details, so that officers are able to contact you if needed.

You are able to ring anonymously.

#### **Contact:**

Department of Child Safety

Emergency outside of normal business hours, contact Crisis Care (1800 177 135 – outside Brisbane; 3235 9999 – within Brisbane)

Queensland Police Service

#### **Definitions**

- A child is an individual under 18 years of age
- A child protection agency refers to agencies with responsibility for investigating reported cases of harm done or being done to children. In Queensland, child protection agencies are:
  - (a) Department of Child Safety
  - (b) Queensland Police Service

A staff member refers to any employee of SCISCO Career Pathways, either full-time, part-time, freelance, casual. (This policy also applies to SCISCO Career Pathways volunteers and/or contractors).

Harm to a child is any detrimental effect on a child's physical, psychological or emotional well-being. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:

- (a) physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect
- (b) sexual abuse or exploitation
- (c) domestic or family violence.

These forms of abuse may be present singly or in any combination.

#### **Allegations of misconduct involving an employee where the employee is suspected of harming a child**

- If the allegation is against a SCISCO staff member, reporting processes/procedures must be followed
- If eventually it is determined the employee is not guilty of the allegation made against him/her, it may still be necessary for disciplinary measures to be taken by the Director of Community Services and/or Executive Director. For example, an employee may be disciplined because they have:

- (a) displayed improper conduct in an official capacity, or improper conduct in a private capacity which reflects seriously and adversely on SCISCO Career Pathways; or
- (b) breached the Code of Conduct applicable to SCISCO employees.

Disciplinary action may include but is not limited to:

- (a) formal warning
- (b) mandatory professional counseling
- (c) termination of the services of the employee.

**Evaluation and Review**

This policy may be updated and evaluated at any time, but will be officially reviewed annually and signed off by the SCISCO Management Committee. It is the responsibility of SCISCO's executive officer to complete the review and update this policy annually.

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Mr Stewart Cooke  
Chairperson, SCISCO Career Pathways

Date: