



QBLAI CHILD AND YOUTH RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY HANDLING DISCLOSURES AND SUSPICIONS OF HARM POLICY

Policy Statement

Queensland Blue Light Association Incorporated (QBLAI) is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people, including those who participate in our activities and programs. In order to support this commitment QBLAI expects that staff respond as quickly as possible and in the best interests of the child or young person under 18 years of age, when disclosures or suspicions of harm are received. QBLAI recognises that children and young people are vulnerable members of the community and that extra measures must be taken to protect and support them.

Scope

This policy applies to all QBLAI employees including but not limited to executives, managers, staff, contractors, consultants, members, volunteers, and approved providers.

Objectives

All employees and volunteers will receive training in identifying risks of harm and handling disclosures or suspicions of harm. All employees and volunteers will report disclosed or suspected harm to their Branch Coordinator, who will report to the State Coordinator, who in turn will report to either the Department of Communities Child Safety and Disability Services or the Queensland Police Service who will decide on an appropriate course of action.

Definitions

Harm may be categorised in the following types:

- physical abuse, for example, beating, shaking, burning, biting, causing bruise or fractures by inappropriate discipline, giving children alcohol, drugs or inappropriate medication
- emotional or psychological abuse, for example, constant yelling, insults, swearing, criticism, bullying, not giving children positive support and encouragement
- neglect for example, not giving children sufficient food, clothing, enough sleep, hygiene, medical care, leaving children alone or children missing school, and
- sexual abuse or exploitation, for example, sexual jokes or touching, exposing children to sexual acts or pornography or having sexual intercourse with a child or young person under 16 years of age (even if the child appears to have consented).

Suspicion of harm

You can suspect harm if you are concerned by significant changes in behaviour or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries.

Disclosure of harm

A disclosure of harm occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened or is likely to happen. Disclosures of harm may start with:

- "I think I saw..."
- "Somebody told me that..."
- "Just think you should know..."
- "I'm not sure what I want you to do, but..."



Procedures to minimise harm to children and young people

Our association works to minimise harm to children and young people by acting in a manner that supports their interests and wellbeing, by:

- making sure that children know that it is their right to feel safe at all times;
- teaching them about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in general;
- letting them know who is and who is not an employee or volunteer in the organisation;
- allowing them to be a part of decision-making processes;
- making sure they are safe by monitoring their activities and ensuring their environment meets all safety requirements;
- taking anything a child or young person says seriously and following up their concerns;
- letting them know there is no secret too awful, no story too terrible, that they can't share with someone they trust;
- teaching them about appropriate and inappropriate contact in a manner appropriate to their age and level of understanding;
- teaching children and young people to say 'no' to anything that makes them feel unsafe;
- encouraging them to tell staff of any suspicious activities or people; and
- listening to children and young people and letting them know that staff are available for them if they have any concerns.

Procedures for receiving a disclosure of harm

Our association will not conduct its own enquiries in relation to the disclosure or suspicion of harm or try to come to an agreement between the parties involved. The person who receives a disclosure or suspects harm is to contact a Police Officer who will in turn contact the relevant authority to ensure information provided is comprehensive and accurate.

Actions following a disclosure of harm

Processes for those involved in the report

The child or young person

The children and young people involved should be offered appropriate counselling and support through the relevant authority.

The person who made the report

Under Section 22 of the Child Protection Act 1999, a person who reports suspected child abuse is protected from civil or criminal legal actions and is not considered to have broken any code of conduct or ethics. Details of the person who made the report are to be kept completely confidential and will not be made available to the family of the child or young person, or the person against whom the allegation has been made.

The person against whom the allegation has been made

If the person responding to the allegation of harm is a member of the association, you may need to review their duties. If they continue to interact/work with children, ensure that they are appropriately supervised at all times. You may want to seek legal advice as to the extent to which that person can carry out duties in the association.



Related documents	QBLAI Child and Youth Risk Management Statement of Commitment; QBLAI Code of Conduct; QBLAI Recruitment Policy; QBLAI child and Youth Protection Policy; QBLAI Procedure for Handling Breaches; QBLAI Working with Children Checks Policy
Policy Owner	QBLAI State Coordinator
Approved by	<i>QBLAI State Board</i>
Last Review Date	8/5/21
Next Review Date	8/5/23