

## **CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY**

Two Way Street (TWS) aims to provide an environment that minimises the risk of children being harmed in any way whilst in the care of TWS, and to protect staff from the possibility that allegations of child maltreatment could be falsely made against them, as a result of their work. Child abuse thrives in secrecy, therefore to prevent child abuse; TWS will develop and maintain an open and aware culture where staff and children are aware of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

TWS believes it has a responsibility to all clients to defend their right to care and protection. To support this right TWS will follow any procedures recommended by child protection authorities, when dealing with any allegations of abuse or neglect of children, and will ensure that all staff undergo appropriate professional development in this area. TWS will also document any evidence of neglect or abuse which may have occurred outside of TWS and follow procedures to ensure the child is protected from harm.

TWS believes it also has a responsibility to its staff to protect their right to confidentiality unless allegations of abuse against them are substantiated.

### **Rationale**

TWS understands it has a duty of care to act immediately to protect and preserve the safety and wellbeing of the children in its care. All staff will be fully informed about their responsibilities to implement and adhere to TWS's child protection policies and procedures.

Child abuse includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Staff need to learn about the nature of child abuse, and develop an awareness of how and why some children are victimised.

TWS believes that the best way to ensure children's protection at TWS is to establish an environment that minimises risks and sets out clear safeguards for staff to follow. It is for this reason and the commitment to being a part of a community that takes responsibility for children's safety that TWS has developed this policy.

### **Strategies**

#### **TWS**

TWS will ensure clear observation of child occupied areas through the following means:

- Inclusion of parent/guardian or primary support person at all times unless there is a compelling reason not to do this
- Where the parent/guardian or primary support person is not present in the room, all doors are kept open and visual and/or at a minimum auditory monitoring must be ensured.
- Where the above conditions are unable to be met for compelling reasons, an agreement must be written up with the parent that ensures appropriate measures are taken and a strategy is in place (for example: real time video monitoring or recording).

### **Validity of volunteers/students**

All persons other than employed staff who perform duties during TWS's hours of operation (paid or unpaid) will be required to present a current DCSI working with children check.

### ***Recruitment of staff***

TWS will ensure all staff provide a current DCSI working with children and working with vulnerable people check (See Staff Requirements policy).

All staff will be oriented to TWS's policies and procedures and code of conduct. Whenever possible new staff will have a period of time to work alongside current staff to familiarise themselves with the clients, families and TWS procedures prior to taking up their new role in a full capacity.

### ***Staff training***

TWS requires all staff to participate in training on child protection organised by relevant child protection authorities or support agencies.

TWS will:

- ensure that staff are knowledgeable about current legislation and reporting requirements related to child protection and maltreatment and that a system for reporting and recording suspicious incidents is in place
- understand their responsibility as mandated reporters
- access current information about the procedures to be taken in relation in allegations of child abuse or neglect
- ensure a guide book to recognising signs of abuse or neglect will be made available to all staff to remind them of the possible signs of child abuse, and the procedures they should follow if a child in their care displays behaviour or physical signs that could indicate abuse has taken place (Reporting Abuse and Neglect – Participants Handbook)
- regularly remind educators about TWS's policies, procedures and confidentiality requirements in regard to child protection

### ***Children's education and empowerment***

Staff will:

- foster children's self-esteem and positive self-image through their interactions and relationships with children
- role model appropriate behaviour and language
- build relationships with all children based on trust and will empower children to discuss and communicate their needs and concerns

### **Practices and Procedures**

#### ***General principles to be applied in the event that protective concerns arise***

Any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection may report their concerns to the Child Abuse Report Line. This means any person, including non mandated licensed children's services are able to make a report when they believe that a child or young person is at risk of harm and in need of protection, and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child. TWS employees are all mandated reporters.

#### ***Reporting concerns***

1. In the course of work hours, if the TWS staff member forms the view that protective concerns exist; they must discuss these concerns as soon as possible with the Director, or if the Director is away, the Business Manager.

2. Following discussions with the Director, a decision will be reached about whether a report will be made and the report will be made by the staff person directly.
3. The staff person involved will be informed of any additional outcomes, but no other staff will be given identifying information about the family unless the Director feels that they need to know. The Director may be present while the staff person makes the report if required. Note that an educator or any other person may independently make a report, regardless of whether the Director or Business Manager decides to do so.
4. The Director or staff person has discretion whether and if so when to notify the family involved that they are making a report. When the suspected abuse involves severe physical injury or sexual abuse, the family will generally not be notified before a report is made. TWS will in these cases be guided by Child Protection as to if and when to notify the family.
5. TWS and each staff member has a right to take any action to ensure that children and staff are safe at all times. This may involve contacting the police if any person or family makes threats against staff.
6. As part of the standard procedure, staff, the Director or Business Manager, will make careful documentation of concerns and any action taken.

*Date of last review: 28 September 2020*