
Incident Response Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, consistent and timely process for responding to incidents that occur at The Good Shepherd Child Contact Services (“the Centre”). This includes any situation that may threaten the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child, parent, carer, staff member or visitor; or otherwise disrupts the safe operation of services. The policy aims to ensure that incidents are managed in a manner which maintains the best interests of the child, supports staff and preserves the integrity of the service.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, parents, carers, children and visitors at the Centre, in all environments where the Centre’s services are delivered (on-site, off-site, in transit or digital). It covers incidents including, but not limited to:

- Child injury, medical emergency or critical incident;
- Allegations of abuse, neglect or harm (child or adult);
- Behavioural incidents (aggression, violence, threats);
- Breach of duty of care, staff misconduct;
- Serious property damage, fire, natural disaster, facility malfunction;
- Data / privacy breach or cyber-incident affecting client or staff information;
- Any incident required to be reported under legislation or regulatory obligations.

3. Definitions

- **Incident:** Any event or circumstance which has the potential to cause harm or disruption or requires immediate management beyond routine procedures.
- **Critical incident:** An incident which involves serious injury or death, or places a child at serious risk of harm, or poses serious operational/ reputational risk.

- **Reporting person:** Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who becomes aware of the incident.
- **Incident coordinator:** The designated manager (or substitute) responsible for leading the incident response.
- **Review team:** A designated group of senior staff or external advisors who review major incidents and implement learnings.

4. Principles

- The best interests of the child are paramount.
- Immediate safety of children and staff is the first priority.
- Transparency, accountability and timeliness in incident management.
- Confidentiality and privacy will be upheld, consistent with legal and regulatory obligations.
- Learning from incidents to improve future practice.
- Compliance with Australian legislation, regulatory standards (including the Australian Children's Contact Services Association Standards) and Centre-specific procedures.

5. Response Procedure

5.1 Immediate action

- Ensure the immediate safety of children, staff and others. If required, call emergency services (000).
- Secure the scene and ensure no further risk of harm.
- Provide required medical attention.
- Notify the Incident Coordinator without delay.

5.2 Incident Reporting

- The reporting person completes an **Incident Report Form** (within 24 hours) including: date/time, location, people involved, description of what happened, actions taken,

witnesses.

- The Incident Coordinator logs the incident in the Centre's Incident Register.
- Notify relevant parties: parent/carer of child(ren) involved, regulatory bodies (if required), insurance provider (if required).
- If a child protection concern arises (or suspected), follow the Centre's Child Protection/Safeguarding policy and mandatory reporting obligations.

5.3 Investigation & Assessment

- The Incident Coordinator conducts an initial assessment of severity and risk (within 48 hours).
- For critical incidents, convene the Review Team to investigate circumstances, root causes and required remedial actions.
- Interviews (where required) with involved persons, collection of evidence, review of supervision notes, policy adherence.
- Maintain confidentiality and fairness during investigation.

5.4 Response & Remedial Action

- Determine what corrective action is required (e.g., staff training, policy revision, changed supervision plan, repair of environment).
- Ensure appropriate support is provided to children, parents, carers and staff affected (e.g., counselling referral).
- Ensure clear communication with affected parties about outcomes, while respecting privacy.
- Update risk assessments, supervision plans and record outcomes of the incident.
- If required, escalate to regulatory body or external review.

5.5 Review & Continuous Improvement

- The Review Team will convene no later than ___ weeks after the incident to evaluate incident handling, outcomes and recommendations.
- Compile an **Incident Review Report**: summary of event, actions taken, lessons learned, changes to policy/procedure, expected timeline for implementation.
- Feed outcomes into staff training, policy updates and supervision practice.
- Update the Incident Register as closed once all remedial action is implemented and audited.

6. Communication

- All staff must be briefed on the incident (as appropriate), including any changes to practice or supervision.
- Senior Management will report to the Board/Committee on serious incidents, trends and mitigation plans.
- Where relevant, parents/carers will be informed of how their child's safety was addressed, and any change in their participation or supervision plan.

7. Record Keeping & Confidentiality

- Incident reports, investigation findings, review reports and corrective action records will be securely stored in locked/secure digital files consistent with Australian privacy legislation.
- Access restricted to authorised personnel only.
- Retention periods follow relevant legal requirements; destruction of records only by approved protocol.
- Reports may be shared with regulatory or legal bodies if required, but not for general disclosure.

8. Staff Roles & Responsibilities

- **All staff/volunteers:** Immediately respond to incidents, prioritise safety, notify the Incident Coordinator, complete report.

- **Incident Coordinator:** Lead incident response, determine actions, coordinate investigation, ensure reporting obligations, maintain Incident Register.
- **Review Team:** Review major incidents, approve investigative findings, recommend systemic changes and monitor implementation of improvements.
- **Management/Board:** Ensure adequate resources are provided, monitor incident trends, ensure compliance, review policy annually.

9. Monitoring & Review

- The Incident Register will be reviewed monthly by Management to identify trends.
- Annual data report to the Board including number/type of incidents, response times, outcomes and learning-points.
- Policy reviewed annually (or sooner if legislative/regulatory change or major incident occurs).

10. Related Policies & References

- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Privacy & Data Protection Policy
- Australian Children's Contact Services Association – Standards for Children's Contact Services. ([Australian Institute of Family Studies](#))
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. (childsafe.humanrights.gov.au)