

CANZ POLICY STATEMENT: VULNERABLE CHILD POLICY

Updated April 2023 – Aotearoa New Zealand Academy Choir version

Overview

CANZ is committed to promoting a protective culture for children. This policy outlines how CANZ and CANZ will promote child protection and includes protocols when child abuse is reported or suspected. It also includes measures to be taken to prevent, identify, and respond appropriately to child abuse. All staff and contractors are expected to be familiar with this policy and to abide by it.

Purpose Statement

CANZ is obliged to ensure the wellbeing of and protect children and students in our care, as well as the prevention of child abuse and neglect. The safety and wellbeing of the child is a top priority when investigating suspected or alleged abuse.

CANZ promotes a safe environment, free from physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse.

Scope

This policy applies to all CANZ Staff that work for and engage with NZSSC or the Aotearoa NZ Academy Choir (“Academy Choir”), including contracted staff, guest interns and volunteers. This policy also applies to volunteers engaged by CANZ to host students as billets overnight and is recommended for parents and singers arranging their own billeting for the Academy Choir courses.

Policy Principles

- The interest and protection of students is paramount in all actions.
- CANZ is open and accountable, understands the importance of child protection and works collectively to ensure student’s care and protection needs are met.
- CANZ has a commitment to ensure that all staff have access to guidance in identification of signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect, and are supported in taking appropriate action in response.
- CANZ will always comply with relevant legislative responsibilities.
- CANZ is committed to share information in a timely way and to discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues, the Choir Manager or, for NZSSC, the NZSSC Student Welfare Manager.
- CANZ is committed to promote a culture where staff are confident that they can constructively raise issues of concern.
- CANZ is committed to promoting the well-being of all members by taking all reasonable steps to provide and maintain an environment that is physically, socially, culturally and emotionally safe.
- CANZ recognises the rights of family to participate in the decision-making about their children.
- CANZ will ensure that a named pastoral care contact is identified for all students (e.g. School Dean, Counsellor) who supports student wellbeing and continuity of care.

Definitions

- a) Abuse – the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, neglect or deprivation of any child.
- b) Billeting – the overnight accommodation of Children in a home that is not their own.
- c) Child or Children – any child or young person aged under 17 years, and who is not married or in a civil union.
- d) Child protection – activities carried out to ensure that children are safe in cases where there is suspected abuse or neglect or the risk of abuse or neglect.
- e) Disclosure – information given to a staff member by the child, parent or caregiver or third party in relation to abuse or neglect.
- f) Oranga Tamariki – the agency responsible for investigating and responding to suspected abuse and neglect and for providing a statutory response to children found to be in need of care and protection.
- g) Neglect – the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical or psychological needs, leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development.
- h) New Zealand Police – the agency responsible for responding to situations where a child is in immediate danger and for working with Oranga Tamariki in child protection work, including investigating cases of abuse or neglect where an offence may have occurred.
- i) Safety Checking – a Ministry of Justice check and good practice processes for pre-employment and Staff volunteers which help manage the risk of unsuitable persons being in contact with Children.
- j) Staff – people employed by CANZ that work for and engage with NZSSC, including contracted staff, guest interns and volunteers. For the purposes of this policy, volunteers engaged by CANZ to host students as billets overnight are also included.

Identifying possible abuse or neglect

Staff may be worried about the wellbeing of a child or young person, but feel unsure about whether to let someone know. Every family is different, and signs of neglect or abuse can be hard to categorise. If staff notice a pattern forming, it could be that something is wrong.

Some of the signs to consider are:

- Unexplained bruises, welts, cuts and abrasions, with no clear explanation
- Unexplained fractures or dislocations, with no clear explanation
- Burn marks, with no clear explanation
- Behavioural concerns such as emotional withdrawal, aggression or anxiety
- The child talking about or subtly mentioning things that may indicate abuse
- Parents seeming stressed or not coping
- Drug or alcohol problems
- Parents not having friends or family to help
- Disclosures of adults hitting or yelling
- Mental health problems
- Children are left home alone or seem to be neglected

There is additional information about identifying child abuse on the Oranga Tamariki website <https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/identify-abuse/>

Responding to suspected abuse or neglect

If staff are concerned or notice any of the above signs, they must refer their concerns to the Choir Manager, and for NZSSC, the Student Welfare Manager in the first instance, as well as to the Chief Executive as soon as possible. Confidentiality will be maintained, subject to information being required to report or address any concerns as noted in the Confidentiality and information sharing section of this policy.

The Choir Manager, and for NZSSC, the Student Welfare Manager will take immediate steps to support the child concerned, discuss concerns with a senior staff member on any course, and provide a written record of the report to the Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive will determine a response to the report, which may require escalation to the CANZ Board and/or report to Oranga Tamariki. If there is clear evidence or reasonable cause to believe an instance of child abuse or neglect has taken place, the Chief Executive will notify the Police.

Allegations or concerns about staff

When a staff member is suspected, the same processes apply.

If there is a need to pursue an allegation as an employer, consultation will take place with the Board and/or the Police before advising the person concerned, informing them that they have a right to seek legal advice and providing them with an opportunity to respond. They should also be informed of their right to seek support from the relevant union/representative body. It is vital to follow ordinary disciplinary policies, guided by the employment contract/collective employment contract and relevant statutory obligations.

Confidentiality and information sharing

Information may be shared to keep children safe when abuse or suspected abuse is reported or investigated. Note that any person who believes that a child has been, or is likely to be, harmed physically, emotionally or sexually or ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived may report the matter to Oranga Tamariki or the Police and, provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

Safer Recruitment (safety checking)

Safety checking will be carried out for all Staff who have direct contact with children. This will include: a Ministry of Justice check, requiring consent and a copy of identification verification; and may include references and an interview. If there is any suspicion that a potential Staff member might pose a risk to a child, that applicant will not be employed.

Staff supervision and support

The Board will ensure resources and/or advice will be available to ensure that all Staff can carry out their roles in terms of this policy, particularly:

- Understanding child abuse and indicators of child abuse.
- Understanding and complying with legal obligations in regard to child abuse.
- Working with relevant agencies (eg the child's school or choir leadership) if there are concerns.
- Planning of environment and supervision to minimise risk.
- Managing relationships with child/parents/family

Relevant Legislation

- Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 / Children's and Young People's Well-being Act 1989
- Children's Act 2014
- Privacy Act 1993

Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years.

Next required policy review date: 2023