

OKAIHAU COLLEGE POLICY: CHILD ABUSE

DEFINITION

Child abuse means the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person. (Section 2 Children and Young Persons Amendment Act 1994).

RATIONALE:

This policy acknowledges that Boards of Trustees have particular responsibilities under legislation as well as social expectations to provide a safe environment that caters for the physical and emotional well-being of its students. Only when students are free of abuse or neglect can they reach their full potential. Young people have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

PURPOSE:

1. To ensure that the safety of the child\young person is paramount. (CYP&F Act (61)).
2. To provide teachers and others working in the school with training and guidelines so they can deal with cases of suspected abuse effectively.
3. To provide procedures for dealing with cases of current or historical abuse.
4. To provide guidelines as to which external agencies will be used, what liaison is required and the appropriate referral procedures.

GUIDELINES:

1. The safety of the young person must be the first consideration in all circumstances.
2. The privacy of the young person should be respected where possible.
3. The flow chart of action should be followed for all cases of disclosure or suspected abuse.
4. Training will be facilitated for all staff to help them identify suspected abuse and to respond appropriately.
5. Decisions about informing parents/caregivers will be made by the Guidance Counsellor and/or Principal or after consultation between the school and the statutory child protection service called in by them.
6. Students are provided with information within the Health and P.E. national curriculum.
7. In the absence of the Guidance Counsellor one of the Deputy Principals (in consultation with SWIS) would normally fill the position of Safety Advocate.

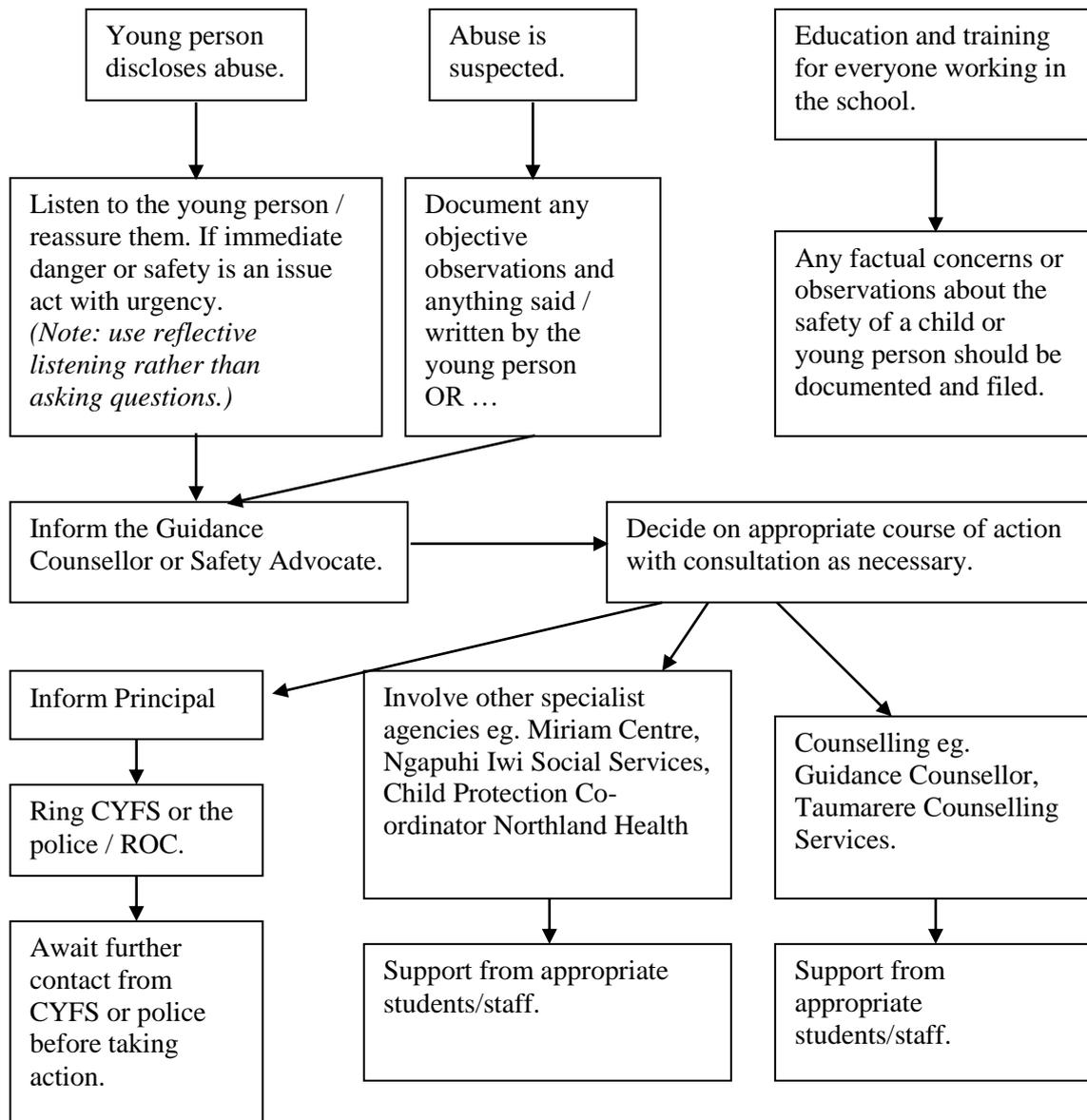
REPORTING PROCEDURES:

- See flow chart of action

It is very important that staff:

- Listen to the young person, reassure them, but do not make promises or commitments you cannot keep.
- Do not formally interview the young person or ask leading questions. Obtain only necessary relevant facts if and when clarification is needed.
- Get support for himself or herself from an appropriate person if needed.

Ensure that any information or disclosures by the young person are written down or reported to the Guidance Counsellor/Principal and check that comments and events surrounding the concern have also been recorded. These should be given to the Guidance Counsellor/Principal. CHILD ABUSE FLOW CHART OF ACTION



Points to note:

- Documentation may subsequently be used in court as evidence for either side.
- Avoid making judgments. Simply record the facts.
- Interviewing of suspected abuse victims is a specialised procedure best left to those who are trained in such techniques.
- The Principal/Guidance Counsellor should be responsible for ensuring that the child's welfare remains paramount.
- Depending on the nature of the disclosure, parents/caregivers will be notified by the Guidance Counsellor/Principal/CYFS when and if appropriate.