

Child Protection Policy

Smile Design Dental Group

Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Smile Design Dental Group recognises that the welfare of patients is paramount and we take seriously our responsibility to identify and report concerns regarding the wellbeing of children and young persons.

Smile Design Dental Group has adopted this Child Protection Policy, affirming our commitment to ensuring the wellbeing and safety of children and young persons who attend our practice.

Smile Design Dental Group designated person for Child Protection is **Alison Shakespeare**. They are responsible for providing support to staff who have a concern about an individual child or who want advice about this child protection policy.

This policy was implemented on: **20/08/2020** This policy will be reviewed annually and is due for review **yearly in August** or prior to this date in accordance with new guidance or legislative changes.

Purpose, scope and principles

Our child protection policy supports our staff to respond appropriately to potential child protection concerns, including suspected abuse or neglect. It is our commitment to protect children and young persons from abuse and to recognise the important roles that all of our staff have in protecting children and young persons.

This policy provides guidance to our staff on how to identify and respond to concerns about the wellbeing of a child or young person, including possible abuse or neglect. It applies to all staff, including volunteers and part-time or temporary roles and contractors. It is intended to protect all children and young persons who staff may encounter, including siblings, the children of adults accessing services and any other children or young persons encountered by staff as they provide their services.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the NZDA Code of Practice: Child Protection (dated 15 August 2018).

A child is a person under the age of 14 years. A young person is a person under the age of 18 years who is not married or in a civil union.

We will endeavor to protect children and young persons by:

- Adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for the team
- Listening to children and young persons
- Providing information to children and young persons
- Providing a safe and friendly environment
- Making staff and patients aware that we take child protection seriously and respond to concerns about the welfare of children and young persons
- Using a multi-agency approach when sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know and involving parents and children appropriately
- Following carefully the procedures for staff recruitment and selection set out in our recruitment policy
- Ensuring that all staff are safety checked
- Providing effective management for staff by ensuring access to supervision, support and training.

Responsibilities

For child protection to work effectively it is essential that everyone understands and fulfils their ethical, legal and social responsibilities. Dental practitioners and the team have a duty of care to consider the wellbeing of their patients, and as part of this, a responsibility in identifying and reporting concerns regarding the wellbeing of children and young people.

Dental practitioners and the team must be familiar with the perioral signs of child abuse and neglect. If a practitioner has concerns about the welfare of a child, they must act.

Dental practitioners also have an obligation to ensure that children and young people are not at risk from practice staff members.

Practitioner responsibilities are principally to recognise and respond appropriately to concerns that they may have. They do not have responsibility to investigate allegations of child abuse; those responsibilities lie with Oranga Tamariki and the Police.

Assessment

Concerns about a child or young person may arise over a period of time or in response to a particular incident. Concerns may arise from observations made by dental staff, reports from the child/young person or from a third party. Practitioners should listen, observe and must exercise sound professional judgement in identifying concerns that require child protection actions. The signs of maltreatment can be physical and/or behavioural and are wide and varied in presentation.

Our approach to identifying abuse or neglect is guided by the following principles:

- We understand that every situation is different and it's important to consider all available information about the child and their environment before reaching conclusions. For example, behavioural concerns may be the result of life events, such as divorce, accidental injury, the arrival of a new sibling etc.
- We understand when we are concerned a child is showing signs of potential abuse or neglect we should talk to someone, either a colleague, manager/supervisor or the Designated Person for Child Protection – we shouldn't act alone.
- While there are different definitions of abuse, the important thing is for us to consider overall wellbeing and the risk of harm to the child. It is not so important to be able to categorise the type of abuse or neglect.
- It is normal for us to feel uncertain, however, the important thing is that we should be able to recognise when something is wrong, especially if we notice a pattern forming or several signs that make us concerned.
- We recognise the signs of abuse and neglect, as set out on pages 4, 5, 6 and 7 and Appendix A of the NZDA Code of Practice: Child Protection (dated 15 August 2018), which include: disclosure by the child, orofacial injury and other physical signs, behavioural observations, developmental delays and dental neglect.
- Every situation is different, and staff will consider all available information about the child and their environment before reaching conclusions.
- When treating a child who has a physical injury, however minor, our staff are trained to ask themselves the following questions:
 - Could the injury have been caused accidentally? If so, how?
 - If an explanation for an injury is given; does it fit the facts as you find them?
 - If there has been a delay on the part of the parents or guardian in seeking dental care; are there good reasons for this?
 - If the explanation of the cause is consistent with the injury, is the cause itself within normal acceptable limits of behaviour?
- Our staff are also trained to consider warning signs of non-physical abuse, by observing:
 - The relationship between parent and child
 - The child's reaction to other people
 - The child's reaction to any medical or dental examination
 - The general demeanour of the child
 - Any comments made by the child and/or parent that give concern.
- When disclosure of abuse or neglect is made, staff should:

- Listen to the child or young person
- Reassure them
- Ask open ended prompts, such as “what happened next?”
- Assess whether they are in distress
- Assess whether they are in danger
- Discuss their concerns with the Designated Person
- Make a comprehensive record

Responding to Concerns

If a practitioner has concerns that a child is being maltreated they may act on this concern, or may first choose to seek advice and council from an appropriate colleague or other professional. If, having discussed the matter the concerns remain, a key first point of contact is Oranga Tamariki who provide a 24/7 contact service, 365 days a year (phone 0508 326 459 or email contact@ot.govt.nz). If there are immediate concerns for the physical safety of the child the police should be contacted by phoning '111'.

Making Records

If child maltreatment is suspected it is important that a detailed record of the observations are made in the child’s record. Details should be specific, objective and include the date and who was present. Accounts of the incident should be recorded verbatim. Injuries should be carefully described and/or photographed. Behavioural observations should be recorded. Document all actions taken, for example, if advice on the case was sought, record from whom, and the content of the discussions or if referral to Oranga Tamariki or Police was made.

All records will be kept in a confidential register. This is kept separate from our other records and access will be strictly controlled.

Recruitment and employment (safety checking)

The Children's Act 2014 requires practices funded by the State Services who employ or contract people to work with children to "safety check" these staff. These checks involve: confirmation of identity, "character" checking by conducting interviews, checking employment records, gaining references, checking professional registration and New Zealand Police vetting and risk assessment. If there is any suspicion that an applicant might pose a risk to a child, that applicant will not be employed.

Safety checks need to be updated every three years after each check is completed.

Training

We are committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognise and respond to abuse through appropriate training. As part of their induction, new staff are made aware of this policy on child protection.

Confidentiality and information sharing

We will seek advice from Child, Youth and Family and/or the Police before identifying information about an allegation is shared with anyone, other than the service manager or designated person. Staff should be aware that:

- Under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989, 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 Child, Youth and Family or the Police and provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.
- When collecting personal information about individuals, it is important to be aware of the requirements of the privacy principles – i.e., the need to collect the information directly from the individual concerned and when doing so to be transparent about: the purposes for collecting the information and how it will be used; who can see the information; where it is held; what is compulsory/voluntary information; and that people have a right to request access to and correction of their information.
- Staff may, however, disclose information under the Privacy Act/Health Information Privacy Code where there is good reason to do so – such as where there is a serious risk to individual health and safety (see privacy principle 11/Code rule 11). Disclosure about ill-treatment or neglect of a child/young person may also be made to the Police or Child, Youth and Family under sections 15 and 16 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989.

Staff involved in cases of suspected child abuse are entitled to have support.

Child safe practice guidelines

To avoid situations where staff may be alone with children, all staff should examine the opportunities or possible situations where staff may be alone with children. Wherever possible an open-door policy for all spaces should be used (excluding toilets). Staff should be aware of where all children are at all times.

Visitors and contractors should be monitored at all times by staff when children or young persons are present.

Where a child or young person requires assistance, e.g., if they are intellectually or physically disabled, if possible staff should involve the parents/caregivers and outside agencies to assist. If this assistance is not available, ensure that the staff members are aware of the appropriate procedures when giving assistance.

All matters involving allegations against staff need to be escalated to the management team.

To ensure the child is kept safe, management may take steps to remove the staff member against whom an allegation has been made from the environment, subject to the requirements of the applicable individual employment contract and relevant employment law.