

## Incident Reporting and Management Policy

### 1. Purpose

Inala Community House (ICH) Out of Home Care (OHC) Service provides and delivers services to foster and kinship carers, children and young people. OHC will work towards establishing a safe environment and take appropriate action in response to incidents which affect, or have the potential to affect, the health, safety or wellbeing of children, young people, foster and kinship carers and workers or other persons.

Incidents involving children and young people, placed in out-of-home care; foster and kinship carers, and ICH (a licensed service) must be reported to the appropriate management level to ensure effective operational responsiveness.

This policy operates in pursuant to the Department's Critical Incident Reporting Policy.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all persons involved with the Out of Home Care Service, including children, young people, foster and kinship carers and workers.

### 3. Definitions

**Department** refers to the government Department responsible for Child Safety.

**Critical or reportable incident** refers to an incident that meets the description of a Category 1 or Category 2 Critical Incident, as per the policy.

**Incident** refers to an event that causes, or could have caused, damage to property, illness, injury, or death. An incident can occur whether or not there is an injury.

### 4. Policy

This policy aims to ensure that incidents of a critical or sensitive nature involving children or young people placed in out-of-home care, carers and workers are reported properly to ensure that they are able to be responded to quickly and appropriately.

Timely and comprehensive alerting of incidents supports both ICH and the Department to:

- Immediately provide appropriate advice and management of an incident including providing children, young people, carers and workers with support
- Effectively provide incident information
- Respond in an informed, accurate and timely manner.

Incidents that are potentially a breach of the Statement of Standards (Section 122 of *Child Protection Act 1999*) (regardless as the nature of the incident) need to be reported in accordance with Category 1 critical incident reporting processes (in accordance with Identifying and Reporting Harm (Standards of Care) Policy).

Incident management is an opportunity to review current practices to aid in the prevention of future crisis and continuous improvement within the organisation.

This policy focuses on incident management regarding children in care. The safety, wellbeing and best interests of a child, both through childhood and for the rest of the child's life, is the paramount principle for the administration of the *Child Protection Act 1999* (the Act).

#### 4.1 Critical Incidents

There are two levels of critical incident reporting:

Category 1 incidents include:

##### Death

- Child dies
- Child is allegedly involved in the death of another person.

##### Life threatening injury (hospitalisation)

- Child receives a life threatening or serious injury that results in hospitalisation.

##### Missing or abducted child

- Child is missing, location is unknown and there are fears for the child's safety or wellbeing – Refer to *Reporting missing children: Guidelines for approved carers and care services*.

##### Major security incident

- Child is involved in an incident (eg a fire, bomb threat, hostage situation, significant destruction of property or theft of a car) and emergency services is required to attend and relocation is required.

##### Rape, sexual assault or other serious assault

- Child is allegedly raped or sexually assaulted
- Child is seriously assaulted and medical treatment is required
- Child is allegedly responsible for rape, sexual assault or serious assault of another person
- Child is allegedly responsible for serious animal cruelty.

##### Significant mental health episode (immediate medical treatment)

- Child experiences a serious mental health episode which places their life at risk and requires immediate medical attention in a hospital.

##### Concern requiring immediate response

- Child experiences harm which is suspected or has been caused by action or inaction of a carer or a household member

- Child experiences a prohibited practice such as the use of physical force, chemical or mechanical restraints, inappropriate hot or cold bathing, applying chilli powder on food or body parts, corporal punishment or other unethical practices.

#### Alleged criminal behaviour

- Child engages in high risk behaviour with an adult, such as communicating in a sexual nature, possessing an image of an adult of a sexual nature (eg on a mobile device) or sending a personal photo of a sexual nature to an adult
- Child leaves the premises with police due to an investigation into their alleged criminal conduct or as an alleged victim of a crime.

#### Negative experience during family time

- Child reports possible harm caused during family time.

#### Serious or life threatening injury

- The carer or a household member receives a life threatening injury whilst performing their role as a carer.

#### Category 1 critical incident reporting requirements include:

- Immediate verbal report to the Manager, OHC and to the Department (CSSC/After Hours)
- A completed Incident Report Form to be submitted to the Department within 4 hours of becoming aware of the incident if the information is received during the business day. If information is received after hours an Incident Report Form is to be completed within 4 hours of the commencement of the next business day.

#### Category 2 incidents include:

##### Serious injury

- Child suffers a serious injury which is not life threatening (eg a broken arm) or experiences a mental health episode that requires medical treatment but does not result in overnight hospitalisation or admittance to a mental health facility.

##### Alleged harm, neglect or exploitation

- Child is allegedly harmed or neglected (not by carers), however, immediate safety is not threatened.

##### Self-injury

- Child directly or deliberately injures their body without the conscious intention to die.

##### Escalating risk taking behaviour

- Child displays increased risk-taking behaviour which poses an increased risk to themselves or others

##### Alleged criminal behaviour

- Child is charged with an offence and/or there is a pending Children's Court hearing

- Child is alleged to have stolen goods or illicit substances in their possession or has suspected involvement in other criminal actions warranting police investigation.

#### Serious threat

- Child makes a serious threat of destruction to property or injury toward others in the care service

#### Substance misuse

- Child engages in substance misuse or the effect of such is observed but does not appear seriously impacted and does not require medical attention or hospitalisation.

#### Absence

- Child is absent for a short period without permission and their location is known or can be quickly established
- Child is absent, their location is known but there are safety concerns eg with a person unauthorised to have contact due to previous harm or allegations of previous harm.

#### Property damage

- Child deliberately causes noticeable damage (eg broken windows, holes in walls), however, relocation is not required
- Child is with another person who causes damage to the property eg a young person is with a friend, and the friend causes the damage.

#### Category 2 critical incident reporting requirements include:

- If information is received during business hours, verbally notify the Manager, OHC and the Department (CSSC) as soon as possible within the business day. An Incident Report Form is to be submitted to the Department within 24 hours.
- If the information is received after hours, generally verbally notify the Manager OHC and the Department (CSSC) the next business day. Some incidents may require immediate verbal notification to After Hours CSSC eg where permission is required by the Department. An Incident Report Form is to be submitted to the Department by 5.00 pm the following business day.

## 4.2 Non-Critical Incidents

#### Non-critical incidents include:

- Incidents which affect the child or young person's physical, emotional or psychological wellbeing, and
- Which does not meet the criteria for critical incident reporting.

#### Examples of non-critical incidents could include, but is not limited to:

- Non-serious injuries to a child or young person that requires medical treatment (but not hospitalisation)
- Bullying/cyberbullying

- Threats, intimidation, creating a disturbance, aggressive behaviour or abuse either by a child or young person placed in out-of-home care or a person not in the household
- Producing a weapon, or indicating one is in their possession.

Any non-critical incidents need to be reported to the Department within one business day of information being received and then documented in case notes.

#### 4.3 Post Incident

Incidents must be appropriately reported and managed in a way that is responsive to the immediate circumstances of the incident, the rights of those involved, and the need to ensure that any risks of recurrence are minimised as far as possible. Following an incident, debriefs are undertaken with workers and carers to help ensure that the placement is prioritising the safety, wellbeing and best interests of a child while supporting the needs of the carer. ICH OHC can provide additional support and training for carers, and advocate for additional measures to meet the needs of the placement. Refer to ICH OHC Supporting Placement Policy.

Critical Incidents are also reviewed by the Board periodically. Where a theme or improvement is identified, this is recorded in the ICH OHC Continuous Improvement Plan and additional training or support is provided to improve organisational practice.

#### 4.4 Roles and Responsibilities

Carers will:

- Report incidents in accordance with this policy
- Participate in post-incident debriefs and engage in support or training to prioritise the safety, wellbeing and best interests of a child if required.

Workers will:

- Determine and report incidents in line with this policy
- Where appropriate provide support and training to carers to prioritise the safety, wellbeing and best interests of a child.

The OHC Manager will:

- Ensure all workers are aware of incident reporting requirements and that incident reporting takes place in the required timeframe
- Immediately report the death of a person and/or abduction of a child or young person placed in out-of-home care to the Chief Executive Officer during business hours. If this information is received After Hours inform the Chief Executive Officer immediately only if further action is required
- Immediately report any major security incidents to the Chief Executive Officer
- Where appropriate, provide support and debrief with workers after an incident
- Manage the local resolution of incidents.

The Chief Executive Officer will:

- Determine if verbal notification to the Nominee is required

- Report incidents externally if required to the Queensland Police and/or Coroner (in the case of a reportable death)
- Ensure that the Board periodically reviews the incident register to explore trends/exceptions in service activity and are used to inform service improvement.

## 5. Review

This policy shall be reviewed every 2 years.

This policy remains in effect unless otherwise determined by resolution of the Board of Directors.

## 6. Related Documents

### **Policies**

ICH OHC Philosophy of Care  
ICH OHC Pre-Placement Policy  
ICH OHC Supporting Placement Policy  
ICH OHC Identifying and Reporting Harm (Standards of Care) Policy  
ICH OHC Managing High Risk Behaviour Policy  
ICH OHC Positive Behaviour Support Policy+  
ICH OHC Supporting Placement Policy  
ICH OHC Carer Renewal Policy  
ICH Privacy Policy  
ICH Human Rights Policy  
ICH Feedback and Complaints Policy  
ICH Confidentiality Policy

### **Other Documents**

Incident Report Form  
ICH OHC Caseworker Guide  
ICH OHC Continuous Improvement Plan  
ICH OHC Incident Register

### **Procedures**

Incident Reporting Procedure  
Reporting Missing Children Procedure

### **References**

*Child Protection Act 1999*  
*Child Protection Regulations 2011*  
*Human Rights Act 2019*

Critical Incident Reporting Policy (Department of Child, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs)

*Reporting missing children: Guidelines for approved carers and care services.*