

## Incident Reporting and Management Policy

### 1. Purpose

Inala Community House (ICH) Family Intervention Services (FIS) responds appropriately to incidents that impact, or have the potential to impact, the health, safety or wellbeing of service users and children.

This policy applies to incidents that impact service users and children, and provides direction about how these incidents are reported and managed. Refer to the ICH Workplace Health & Safety Policy for incidents that impact workers, and relevant reporting requirements.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, students and volunteers within ICH FIS. For the purpose of this policy, these persons shall be referred to as workers. This policy addresses ICH FIS requirements in alignment with the Department's most recent Families Investment Specification and operates in pursuant to the Department's Critical Incident Reporting Policy.

### 3. Definitions

**The Department:** Refers to the Queensland Government Department responsible for Family Services programs and/or Child Protection or Child Safety.

**Incident:** 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.

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

**Non-critical incidents:** Impact the service user of child/young person's physical, emotional or psychological wellbeing but do not meet the criteria for critical incident reporting, as per the policy.

**Harm:** Is defined in the *Child Protection Act 1999* as 'any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing'. The Act specifies that it doesn't matter how the harm was caused but includes physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect as possible causes. It also recognises that harm can be caused by a single incident of abuse or be a cumulative impact of multiple incidents.

**Mandatory reporting:** Defines that ICH workers are mandated to report a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse. Under the Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020, it is an offence in Queensland for any adult not to report sexual offending against a child by another adult to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse not to (which includes reporting to Child Safety).

## 4. Policy

This policy aims to ensure that incidents of a critical or sensitive nature involving service users, children or young people are reported properly to ensure that they are responded to quickly and appropriately. The priority is to ensure the immediate and long-term safety of service users (and their children).

Timely and comprehensive alerting of incidents supports both ICH and the Department to provide appropriate advice, and respond in an informed and timely manner to manage an incident (including providing children, service users and workers with support).

Incident management is an opportunity to review current practices to aid in the prevention of future crisis and continuous improvement within the organisation. Sharing information in a timely and accurate way through day-to-day case work is particularly important to help mitigate the escalation of risks and the occurrence of incidents.

### 4.1 Mandatory reporting of harm or risk of harm to a child

ICH FIS puts children first, has zero tolerance to child harm and is committed to child wellbeing and safety. All ICH FIS workers participate in mandatory child protection training and receive ongoing professional coaching to ensure their practice promotes child safety and adheres to mandatory reporting requirements. ICH FIS workers must report to Child Safety if they form a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering or is at unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse. They must also report any reasonable suspicion that a child is in need of protection as a result of any other form of abuse or neglect.

While accountability for child safety and delivering child protection services rests with the Department, ICH FIS works in partnership with all stakeholders to prioritise child wellbeing and safety. This is reflected in our case management approach. Refer to ICH FIS Philosophy Statement and ICH FIS Case Management Policy for further detail.

In the context of FIS work, it is acknowledged that families are referred following the Department's assessment of harm or unacceptable risk of harm to children and young people. Therefore, residual risk within service user homes may continue to be present due to the challenges faced by the families involved in the child protection system. ICH FIS workers shall exercise professional judgement and seek guidance from the ICH FIS Manager if there are concerns about the level of risk. Judgement is informed by well documented case notes, case planning and monitoring, and day-to-day casework.

ICH FIS shall observe the principles of natural justice when responding to allegations of harm, abuse and/or neglect, and all parties receiving a service from ICH FIS shall be supported during associated investigations. Natural justice or procedural fairness ensures that the person who may be adversely impacted has an opportunity to comment on relevant issues and information if this is deemed appropriate.

#### *Mandatory reporting - children who are service users*

Where a child or young person is a service user and is experiencing harm, or is at risk of harm, or a child reports they have been harmed, this should be reported in accordance with this policy, the ICH FIS Critical Incident Reporting Procedure and done using the Critical Incident Reporting Form (refer to 4.1 Critical Incidents and 4.2 Non-Critical Incidents).

### *Mandatory reporting - children who are not service users*

Where ICH FIS workers suspect that a child that is experiencing harm, or is at risk of harm, or a child reports they have been harmed, a report should be made to a Child Safety Service Regional Intake Service (RIS). The Brisbane and Moreton Bay RIS can be contacted on 1300 682 254 during business hours (9am-5pm). Outside of these hours, contact the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre on 1800 177 135 (Queensland only).

Regardless of whether children are service users or not:

- The ICH FIS Manager will also inform the ICH OHC Manager if the child is in an ICH placement.
- Once reported, details of the incident are stored on the SRS and noted in the incident register. The ICH FIS Manager informs the CEO and formally reports monthly through the Board reporting process.

Note that it is an offence in Queensland for any adult not to report sexual offending against a child by another adult to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse not to (which includes reporting to Child Safety).

## 4.2 Critical Incidents

ICH FIS workers have a responsibility to report critical incidents if the worker is present when an incident occurs. The ICH FIS Worker must report a critical incident if they are likely to be the first to know or be advised directly about the incident from a person who has been involved. Where required, ICH FIS workers shall seek advice from the ICH FIS Manager about their reporting obligations. In some instances, an incident may constitute a mandatory reporting requirement (refer to section 4.1 above for further information).

There are two levels of critical incident reporting:

### **Category 1 incidents include:**

#### Death

- Service user or child dies
- Service user or child is allegedly involved in the death of another person.

#### Life threatening injury (hospitalisation)

- Service user or child receives a life threatening or serious injury that results in hospitalisation.

#### Major security incident

- Service user or child is involved or suspected to be involved in an incident or the planning of an incident which poses significant risk to the safety of others (e.g., arson, bomb threat, hostage situation, unlawful possession of a weapon etc.) which is reported to emergency services.

Rape, sexual assault or other serious assault (mandatory reporting requirement where the child is the victim)

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

Significant mental health episode (immediate medical treatment)

- Service user or child experiences a serious mental health episode which places their life at risk and requires immediate medical attention and hospitalisation.

Motor vehicle incident

- The service user or child is involved in a motor vehicle incident involving a FIS vehicle where they are taken to hospital.

Category 1 critical incident reporting requirements include:

- The ICH FIS worker must notify the ICH FIS Manager and the Department as soon as practicable (CSO or Child Safety After Hours if outside of business hours).
- A completed critical 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 a critical incident report form is to be completed within 4 hours of the commencement of the next business day.
- The ICH FIS Manager will email the CEO notifying of all Critical Incidents.
- Refer to the ICH FIS Incident Reporting Procedure for further detail.

**Category 2 incidents include:**

Injury requiring medical attention (mandatory reporting requirement if injury resulted from physical abuse)

- Service user or child suffers a serious injury which is not life threatening (e.g., a broken arm)

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 (mandatory reporting requirement)

- Where a child or young person is a service user and is experiencing harm, or is at risk of harm, or a child reports they have been harmed. However, immediate safety is not threatened.

Self-injury

- Service user or child directly or deliberately injures their body without the conscious intention to die.

Serious threat

- Service user or child makes a serious threat of injury toward others or themselves
- Service user or child produces a weapon

#### Domestic and Family Violence

- A service user is a victim of an act of violence or threats of family violence (note this does not include where a child has experienced harm because of domestic violence as this would be a mandatory reporting requirement).

#### Missing Service User or Child

- Service user or child's location is unknown and safety/wellbeing is compromised/cannot be established.

#### Motor Vehicle Incident

- Service user or child is involved in a motor vehicle incident in a FIS vehicle where medical treatment is required but overnight hospitalisation is not required.

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

- If information is received during business hours, notify the ICH FIS Manager, and the Department (CSSC) as soon as practicable within the business day. A critical incident report form is to be submitted to the Department within 24 hours.
- If the information is received after hours, notify the ICH FIS Manager and the Department (CSSC) the next business day. A critical incident report form is to be submitted to the Department by 5.00 pm the next business day following the incident.
- The ICH FIS Manager will email the CEO notifying of all Critical Incidents.
- Refer to the ICH FIS Incident Reporting Procedure for further detail.

## 4.2 Non-Critical Incidents

#### Non-critical incidents include:

- Incidents which affect the service user or 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 are not limited to:

- Non-serious injuries to a service user or 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 or service user

Any non-critical incidents need to be documented in case notes and reported to the Department within two business days either verbally or in writing.

## 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 ICH FIS workers to help ensure that:

- workers are supported appropriately and ensure their wellbeing and future safety

- the safety, wellbeing and best interests of a child or young person continues to be upheld
- the service user continues to be supported, taking into consideration the nature and circumstances of the incident.

Critical Incidents are reported monthly to the Board. Where a theme or improvement is identified, this is recorded in the ICH FIS Continuous Improvement Plan and additional training or support may be provided to workers to help improve organisational practice.

#### 4.4 Roles and Responsibilities

ICH FIS workers will:

- Determine and report incidents in line with this policy and seek guidance from the ICH FIS Manager where required.

The ICH FIS Manager will:

- Ensure all ICH FIS workers are aware of incident reporting requirements and that incident reporting takes place in the required timeframe.
- Where appropriate, provide support and debrief with workers after an incident.
- Inform the CEO and provide monthly reports to the Board.
- Manage the local resolution of incidents.
- Ensure that all critical incidents are appropriately recorded on relevant registers.
- Ensure that incidents are reviewed within the context of continuous improvement.

The Chief Executive Officer will:

- 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.
- Ensure that the FIS Manager is supported appropriately.

## 5. Review

This policy shall be reviewed every 3 years.

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

## 6. Related Documents

### Policies

ICH Risk Management Policy  
ICH FIS Case Management Policy  
ICH Workplace Health & Safety Policy  
ICH FIS Philosophy Statement

### **Procedures**

Incident Reporting Procedure  
Personal Safety in the Community Procedure  
Working Alone Procedure  
Emergency Duress Procedure

### **Other documents**

Critical Incident Reporting Form  
ICH FIS Continuous Improvement Plan  
ICH FIS Incident Register

### **References**

*Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)*  
*Child Protection Regulations 2011*  
*Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020*,  
Qld Human Services Quality Framework  
Critical Incident Reporting Policy and Incident Categories (Department of Child, Youth  
Justice and Multicultural Affairs)  
Departmental guidelines to support [Mandatory Reporting](#)