

Harkerss Buses Child Protection Policy

Purpose

Harkerss Buses takes the safety of all its passengers, particularly children, seriously.

This policy has been adopted by Harkerss Buses as part of its duties under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014, and in recognition of its role in identifying, reporting and assisting in reducing the neglect and abuse of New Zealand's vulnerable children.

This policy sets out expectations and policies to protect its child passengers, and any other children it encounters, from abuse or inappropriateness from its own staff, and identifying, responding, and reporting abuse or neglect from third parties.

Scope

This policy applies to all Harkerss Buses staff (employees, contractors, and volunteers) and particularly drivers.

Ginny Terry is Harkerss Buses Child Protection Person. She can be approached by all staff to discuss suspected child abuse and neglect of any children encountered by the staff of Harkerss Buses, and is responsible for notifying suspected child abuse and neglect to the appropriate authorities.

Ginny's contact details are as follows:

- 03 324 3836
- 021888417
- ginny.terry05@gmail.com

Principles

Harkerss Buses culture of child protection is as follows:

- All children have the right to be free from neglect and abuse
- The safety and wellbeing of children is very important to Harkerss Buses
- Early intervention and the most appropriate and least-invasive level of intervention of child abuse or neglect is essential
- Staff are encouraged to freely share information and discuss potential child abuse or neglect of child passengers or any other children encountered with the Child Protection Person
- Staff will not face disciplinary action for genuine reporting of child abuse or neglect.

Key definitions:

Child or young person is a person under 17 years who is not married or in a civil union.

Abuse is harming (physically abuse, sexually abuse, or emotionally abuse), ill-treatment, or deprivation of any child.

Neglect is the regular failure to meet a child's basic physical or physiological needs, leading to adverse or impaired physical or emotional functioning or development.

Physical Abuse is any acts that result in physical harm of a child, including cutting, hitting, beating, biting, burning, causing abrasions, strangulation, suffocation, drowning, poisoning, or inducing illness.

Sexual Abuse is any acts that involve forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. This includes –
Contact abuse: touching breasts, genital/anal fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetrative or non-penetrative contact with the anus or genitals, encouraging the child to perform such acts on the perpetrator or another, involvement of the child in activities for the purposes of pornography or prostitution.
Non-contact abuse: exhibitionism, voyeurism, exposure to pornographic or sexual imagery, inappropriate photography or depictions of sexual or suggestive behaviours or comments.

Emotional Abuse is any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development. This can include patterns of isolation, degradation, constant criticism or negative comparison to others.

Guidance on identifying and reporting child abuse or neglect

Indicators of child abuse:

- Physical signs: Unexplained injuries, burns, unusual/excessive itching, genital injuries
- Development delays: Small for their age, cognitive delays, poor speech or social skills
- Emotional abuse: sleep problems, significant low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, significant difficulty to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness
- Behavioural concerns: age-inappropriate sexual interest or play, fear of a certain person or place, eating disorders/substance abuse, disengagement/neediness, aggression
- The child talks about potential abuse/neglect.

Indicators of child neglect:

- Physical signs: looking uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight
- Development delays: Small for their age, cognitive delays, poor speech or social skills
- Emotional neglect: sleep problems, significant low self-esteem, obsessive behaviour, significant difficulty to cope in social situations, sadness/loneliness
- Behavioural concerns: disengagement/neediness, eating disorders/substance abuse, aggression
- Neglectful supervision: often inappropriately unsupervised in public, left alone inappropriately, no 'home' to return to
- Medical neglect: skin disorders, untreated medical disorders, often sick/unwell.

If a child talks to a staff member about abuse or neglect, the staff member should -

- Listen to the child
- Reassure the child that they are not in trouble and have done the right thing
- If possible, record or write down what the child said

If the child appears to be in immediate danger, the staff member must immediately contact the NZ Police:

- call 111 in an emergency; or
- contact the nearest Police Station (contact details can be found at www.police.govt.nz)

If the child does not appear to be in immediate danger:

- The staff member involved should discuss what the child said, their circumstances, and child abuse/neglect indicators to Child Protection Person as soon as possible.
- The Child Protection Person should consider the circumstances and –
 - If the child may be in immediate danger, contact the NZ Police at 111 (if it is an emergency) or local Police station
 - If it appears that the child has been, or will likely be, abused or neglected, contact the Child Youth and Family at:
 - 0505 326 459; or
 - cyfcallcentre@cyf.govt.nz
- If it is unclear whether the child has been or will likely be abused or neglected, but there is still concern for the child's well-being, contact Child Youth and Family, or other local child/family organisations like:
 - Strengthening Families
 - Whānau Ora
 - Iwi Social Service
 - Social Workers in schools
 - Children's Teams
 - Family/whānau counselling agencies,
 - Mental health and drug and alcohol agencies.

Staff must not Physically Abuse, Sexually Abuse, or Emotionally Abuse child passengers

All staff members must not physically abuse, sexually abuse, or emotionally abuse children passengers, or any other children encountered in their role.

If an Operator reasonably believes that a staff member has physically abused, sexually abused, or emotionally abused a child passenger or any other child encountered in their role, they may face serious disciplinary action, dismissal and reporting to Child Youth and Family and/or New Zealand Police.

If a staff member genuinely believes that another staff member has physically abused, sexually abused, or emotionally abused a child passenger or any other child encountered in their role, they should report it to the Child Protection Person or a manager (If appropriate). Otherwise, if the staff member considers this insufficient, to the New Zealand Police, or Child Youth and Family.

A staff member who reports child abuse or neglect genuinely, will not face disciplinary, civil or criminal action (*ss 15 and 16 Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989*)

Guidance on allegations made against staff for child abuse of child passengers

Harkerss Buses treats all allegations of child abuse committed by its staff seriously, whether the alleged abuse is recent or historic.

Allegations will be escalated to the Child Protection Person and/or the organisation's management team who will raise it with Child, Youth and Family or the NZ Police.

If it is decided that employment action should be taken, the relevant staff member will be informed of the allegation, provided with a meaningful opportunity to get legal advice and respond to the allegation.

To protect the relevant child or children from unnecessary risk, the relevant staff member may be removed from contact with the child or children.

Professional development

Harkerss Buses will provide sufficient training to staff and Child Protection Person to promote the protection of children by the organisation.

Staff will be informed of this policy, and provided with sufficient training on identifying potential child abuse or neglect of its child passengers and any other child encountered, how to respond to it, and how to act appropriately and professionally with child passengers.

The Child Protection Person will be provided with sufficient training to provide guidance and expertise on child protection to the organisation.

Review of the policy

This policy will be reviewed by Harkerss Buses every three years in consultation with Harkerss Buses staff.