

Identifying risk of harm to child



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Child Protection Scenario

What indicators of risk of harm can you identify in the scenario?

- Georgia appears rather agitated when her brother comes to pick her up
- Georgia pulls away when her eldest brother Peter goes to pick her up
- Staff members are noticing that Georgia is seeming withdrawn from activities lately
- Staff members have noticed that for the past two weeks Georgia has been regressing in toilet training has been wetting her bed every day
- When having a conversation with Georgia she tells you how she doesn't like when Peter comes into her room at night when she's asleep

What would you say to Georgia in response to the above conversations?

What action would you take based on the scenario?

Talk to your director about what you have observed and conversations you have had with Georgia. Keep written documentation on everything you have observed kept in a locked cupboard in the child's file. Access the Mandatory Reporters Guide and answer the questions and from there it will direct you on what to do next. Always follow the correct steps and remember that best interest of the child is paramount. Protecting a child's wellbeing is a shared issue between a number of different organisations and individuals. (Council of Australian Governments, 2010)

What are the key points to remember in responding to a child's disclosure (verbal and non-verbal)?

When responding to a child's disclosure keep your facial expressions calm and don't act shocked. Always listen very closely, getting down to eye level and thank the child for confiding with you. Let the child know that she/he isn't the first person this has happened to and always talk age appropriately. (Child Wise, 2012). Never ask direct questions and wait for the child to come to you first. Ensure that you don't pass any of your own personal judgement onto the child and respond in ways that make her feel safe and that you genuinely care about her. (Briggs and Buttrose, n. d, pp. 238-239)

According to the policy, outline the steps you would take in response to the situation;

The Make Believe Pre-School has a duty of care and obligation to defend the child's rights to care and protection. The Pre-School must abide by all relevant Child Protection Legislation and must have procedures in place to ensure this and by promoting child protection awareness in the community through support of parents. There are various legislative requirements that the Make Believe Pre-School management committee can use to help them to develop a framework for the protection of children and also to ensure that staff know what needs to be done in relation to child protection. Their Child Protection Policy clearly states that;

- All staff have the responsibility to report to Department of Community Services (DoCS) for suspected Risk of Significant Harm (RoSH).

- Observe and document all signs of RoSH and keep in a locked file in the child's folder
- Report to the authorised supervisor
- Refer to the MRG to determine what process to follow
- Ensure children know that they never deserve to be harmed or abused

What record keeping and documentation would be necessary in this situation?

Take extreme care that all documentation for a child at risk of significant harm is kept confidential and in a locked file under the child's name. Observe the child closely and document any further conversations always including a clear description, date and time. Any personal opinions or judgement should not be included in documentation. (Farrell and Sheringham, n. d, p. 186). If you have any telephone conversations with outside agencies be sure conversation is on speakerphone with another person present. Consult with your director on a regular basis on the situation of the child and print off any MRG decisions and keep in a confidential folder.

Identify the potential ethical concerns. How might you respond to this concern? Who would you seek support from?

There is clearly a cultural and family issue in this scenario. There is also a language barrier as an interpreter is needed for the mother. This has the potential for information to be misunderstood and the correct information not to be communicated successfully. The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) encourages diversity and respecting cultures. Georgia belongs to two different cultures, Australian and Chinese and as educators we need to

respect the diversity of the child. (DEEWR, 2009, p. 13) We also need to understand the long term concerns for the child and the family, if it is found that Georgia is being abused. The (Early Childhood Australia, 2006) Code of Ethics encourages us to learn as much as we can about the culture, customs, lifestyle and language of our children. The school should express its concerns to the Department of Education's Children's Wellbeing Unit or a Family Referral Service (Farrell and Sheringham, n. d, p. 191). We should seek support from the local church which the family attend, other family members, other people in the community who know the family well and a Chinese language interpreter. We must ensure that all information regarding the child remains confidential and any information passed on is on a 'need to know' basis.

What strategies would you put in place to protect the rights of the child and maintain your professional relationship and duty of care with Georgia and her family?

As the (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2012), expresses in Standard 2. 3, Element 2. 3. 4, that " every educator, co-ordinator, family care educator assistant and staff member has legal and ethical obligation to act and protect any child who is at risk of abuse or neglect." Australia is a part of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and as signatories to this, we recognize that every child has the right to protection and never to be hurt by others, also to always have the best interests of the child first (The United Nations, 1989). To maintain a professional relationship and duty of care to Georgia we need to remember to never be judgemental and that Georgia knows she is respected and

trusted in the Pre-School. The privacy of Georgia and her family is essential in any discussions regarding Georgia's safety and wellbeing. If the child is deemed to be RoSH the family may not be informed of the process as it could cause risk to the child and it's their interest which are a priority. As Georgia's family has a high status in the community there is potential for disbelief of the proposed sexual abuse. (Briggs and Buttrose, n. d, pp. 238-239). Staff are not allowed to become overly involved or emotional in this situation, follow the correct process, act when you need to and always keep information clearly documented.

References

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