

Policy Manual Policy 3.19

Establishing and Maintaining Tenancies Child Protection

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline how Wentworth Housing responds to suspected or actual risk of harm, abuse and neglect to children and young people. Wentworth Housing is committed to providing a service that is in accordance with the Children and Young Persons Care and Protection Act (1988).
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2. Policy

Wentworth Housing is committed to principles of early identification of risk, early intervention and a collaborative agency approach to the wellbeing of children and young people as set out under the NSW Government Keep Them Safe Guidelines.

This policy covers Mandatory Reporting and Exchange of Information.

2.1 Wentworth Housing's role as a mandatory reporter

Wentworth Housing staff are not authorised to investigate suspected cases of neglect, abuse and risk of harm or actual harm for children and young people.

Wentworth Housing Staff are required to do the following:

Under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, Wentworth Housing employees are classified as mandatory reporters. (Wentworth Housing is known as a prescribed body under the act) This means that if during the course of their work they have a reasonable suspicion that a child (aged 0-15) is at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect, they are legally obliged to report these concerns to the Department of Family and Community Services. This includes the children of a tenant, their guests and also housing applicants.

While it is not mandatory to report reasonable suspicions that a young person (aged 16-17 years) or unborn children is at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect Wentworth Housing staff will use professional judgement in deciding whether concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of an unborn child or a young person warrant a report to NSW Family and Community Services.

2.2 Exchange of Information when a child or young person may be at risk

Chapter 16A of the *Children, Young Person Care and Protection Act (1988)* allows agencies prescribed under the act to exchange information about children and young people. Community Housing providers are "prescribed bodies" under the act. This means Wentworth Housing staff can exchange information without consent if a child or young person is considered to be at risk.

The information must be exchanged lawfully. Staff must check with their direct supervisor and gain approval before exchanging information.

Information may be exchanged between organisations for the following reasons

- to make a decision, assessment or plan for a child or young person
- to initiate or conduct an investigation (such as NSW Police)
- to provide a service related to safety, welfare or wellbeing
- to manage risks to children or young people as an employer

2.3 Tenancy Support and Referrals for Children, Young People and their families

When risk of harm concerns do not meet the statutory reporting threshold for notification to the Family and Community Services, Wentworth Housing will still work collaboratively to support children, young people and their families.

Wentworth Housing will actively encourage children, young people and their families to engage with other services such as Brighter Futures in order to create a safe and supportive home environment and reduce the risk of harm, abuse and neglect occurring.

If a family chooses not to engage with support services Wentworth Housing will remind families of the services available and monitor ongoing concerns through our housing services contact with the family.

Wentworth will consider the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people when making housing management decisions such as management transfers, arrears management and any action taken at the CTTT.

3. General principles

3.1 Wentworth will adhere to the following principles in regards to Child protection, including mandatory reporting and exchange of information.

3.1.1 Wentworth Housing will ensure that:

- signs of abuse and neglect and risk of harm are recognised
- Any suspected case of significant harm, neglect and abuse are reported to the NSW Department of Family and Community Services through the Child Protection Helpline
- Where appropriate, information is shared with the relevant agencies in order to prevent abuse and neglect taking into account privacy principles and need to know basis;
- Collaborate with relevant Government departments and non-government organisations, where necessary, to ensure the safety, welfare and wellbeing of all children and young person's residing in Wentworth Housing properties, and
- ensure Wentworth Housing staff are properly trained and resourced to implement this policy

4. Responsibility

Client Service Officers, Asset Officers, Contractors and other employee of Wentworth Housing (All)

Report any instances where children may be at risk, or suspected to be at risk of harm, abuse or neglect and to report to their direct supervisor

Client Services Manager

Document, assess and collect information in any instances where a child may be at risk of harm, abuse or neglect. .

Manager, Housing Services

Monitor notification process, and approve notification of children at risk of harm or suspected to be at risk of harm, neglect and abuse to Family and Community Services

Human Resources/Corporate
Services

Ensure that all staff have completed a Criminal Records
Background Check (CRBC) and where required , hold a
current Working with Children Check (WWC)

5. Definitions and References

RTA

- Residential Tenancy Agreement

NCAT

- NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal
- Residential Tenancies Act 2010
- Child and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- Privacy and Personal Information Act 1988
- Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002

Related Policy

- Domestic Violence Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Related document Customer service charter, NSW_Mandatory Reporter Guide