



Related Policies

Child Protection
Child Protection – Mandatory Reporting ACT
Complaints

Purpose

This policy addresses the obligation of the Catholic Education Office on behalf of the Archbishop and the school to investigate complaints made against an employee where the complaint raises issues such as the employee's relationship with a student or the employee's conduct towards or with a student.

The primary objective of this policy is the safety and well being of children.

This policy aims to ensure that principles of natural justice are employed to ensure that:

- complaints are investigated promptly and thoroughly; and
- the complaint resolution process is grounded in principles of procedural fairness.

Policy

A complaint made against an employee of the Catholic Education Office (CEO) which raises concerns for the safety and well being of a child or young person will be subject to inquiry by the employer using procedures outlined in this policy.

All such complaints **must** be notified immediately to the Catholic Education Office (CEO) Human Resources Division.

The employee against whom the complaint is made may expect a fair inquiry process which includes:

- confidentiality;
- adequate access to information regarding the complaint;
- an opportunity to respond to the complaint;
- reasonable notice for meetings and interviews;
- the right to have a support person present for interviews;
- an impartial decision maker and an impartial decision making process;
- the opportunity to respond to adverse findings and recommended disciplinary action.

If there is a departure from rules of procedural fairness in particular cases the reasons for the departure must be documented.

Child Protection (ACT) Responding to Complaints Against Employees

The appropriate response by the employer to each complaint and each employee must be determined by reference to the particular, factual circumstances surrounding each case. When planning a response to a complaint, careful consideration should be given to the particular vulnerabilities of any child(ren), employee, witness or notifier of which the employer or investigator becomes aware. The procedures adopted in response to the complaint should aim to minimise anxiety and to demonstrate sensitivity, compassion and respect for all involved while maintaining the integrity of the inquiry process.

If a complaint alleges **abuse** or **neglect** the matter must be referred to the ACT Department of Family Services. In some cases the Police may be involved. In cases involving abuse or neglect, the employer must await the advice the Department of Family Services or Police as to when an employee is informed of the complaint or when the inquiry may be commenced. The employer will liaise closely with such statutory agencies to ensure that the matter is dealt with fairly and efficiently.

Definitions

Abuse

Under the *Children and Young People Act 1999* (ACT) abuse, in relation to a child or young person means –

- a) physical abuse; or
- b) sexual abuse; or
- c) emotional abuse (including psychological abuse) if the child or young person –
 - (i) has suffered, is suffering or is likely to suffer in a way that has caused, is causing or is likely to cause significant harm to his or her wellbeing or development;
 - (ii) has been, is being or is likely to be exposed to behaviour that is a domestic violence offence within the meaning of the *Protection Orders Act 2001*, dictionary, and that has caused, is causing or is likely to cause significant harm to the child or young person's wellbeing or development.

Child

- Under the *Children and Young People Act 1999* (ACT), is a person who is **under 12 years old**.

Class or Kind Matters

The "Class or Kind" definition is relevant only to employees working in NSW. The definition is included in the ACT policy to illustrate the type of matters that are best managed at school level rather than by CEO personnel.

Extracted from *Determination by the NSW Ombudsman under Section 25CA of the Ombudsman Act concerning the Catholic Education Office, Canberra and Goulburn*

3.0 Determination Regarding Employees of the Catholic Education Office Canberra and Goulburn

- 3.1 Pursuant to s.25CA of the *Ombudsman Act 1974* (the Act), the Ombudsman has determined that the Catholic Education Office, Canberra and Goulburn has achieved a standard of investigative practice whereby the following kinds of reportable allegations against employees of the Catholic Education office Canberra and Goulburn need not be notified to the Ombudsman under s.25C(1):

Child Protection (ACT) Responding to Complaints Against Employees

3.1.1 Allegations of physical assault, in so far as they involve:

(a) Age group 1: Children attending pre-school to Year 4

- Hitting or smacking a child below the head and neck, grabbing, pushing, pulling or poking a child except where:
 - The behaviour resulted in harm or injury¹ to the child; or
 - The behaviour involved an assault to a child on the head or neck other than with a small and light object as specified in (c) below; or
 - Other allegations of the same type indicate a pattern or escalation of the behaviour².

(b) Age group 2: Children attending Year 5 to Year 12

- Any allegation of physical assault below the head and neck except where:
 - The behaviour resulted in harm or injury³ to the child; or
 - The behaviour involved an assault to a child on the head or neck other than with a small and light object as specified in (c) below; or
 - Other allegations of the same type indicate a pattern or escalation of the behaviour.⁴
- Allegations of unreasonable conduct or use of excessive force to protect a child in a situation which was perceived to be harmful or threatening to the safety of a child, group of children, employee or any other person, **which do not fall within the 'reasonable conduct' exemption set out in the definition of reportable conduct in s 25A** except where:
 - The behaviour resulted in harm or injury⁵ to the child or children.

(c) All age groups – use of objects

- Throwing a small and light object towards a child/children except where:
 - The object could reasonably be expected to inflict harm; or
 - It could be inferred that there was intention to harm any child.
- Hitting a child/children with a small and light object except where:

¹ Any alleged physical assault claimed to have resulted in more than transitory harm or injury, such as bruising, abrasions, welts, stiffness of the body part or area must be notified to the Ombudsman.

² One-off incidents that in themselves are exempted but which reflect an increasing seriousness may constitute escalated behaviour requiring notification.

³ See footnote 1 above

⁴ See footnote 2 above

⁵ See footnote 1 above

Child Protection (ACT) Responding to Complaints Against Employees

- The object could reasonably be expected to inflict harm; or
- It could be inferred that there was intention to harm a child/children.

3.1.2 Allegations of neglect where the alleged matter involves a failure to provide supervision or a failure to provide adequate medical treatment where the risk of harm was reasonably perceived at the time to be low, unless a pattern of behaviour is evident.

3.2 This Determination does not cover the following:

- (a) allegations of any sexual offence or sexual misconduct (including child pornography); or
- (b) allegations of physical assault that also include an allegation of any sexual offence or sexual misconduct; or
- (c) where the allegation involves a child/children in age group 1, any allegation of physical assault that is not listed in 3.1.1(a); or
- (d) reportable allegations which are also reported to the Department of Community Services (DoCS) or the Police; or
- (e) allegations of behaviour causing psychological harm; or
- (f) convictions of reportable conduct; or
- (g) any allegations where the behaviour resulted in injury or harm to the child; or
- (h) allegations which when first received appeared to fall within the Determination but upon investigation reveal behaviours not exempted by this Determination, must be reported fully according to section 25C (1-3); or
- (i) any allegation which is similar to a prior allegation and which indicates a pattern of behaviour or an escalation in the seriousness of behaviour.

3.3 In relation to the kinds of reportable allegations against employees referred to in 3.1 above, the Archbishop is responsible for ensuring that:

- Each allegation is investigated, including undertaking a risk assessment and making a finding as a result of that investigation. The level of investigation should be commensurate with the level of seriousness of the allegation and the perceived risk to a child or children;
- Appropriate action is taken as a result of that investigation;
- Adequate records are kept of the investigation and the reasons for taking or not taking any action as a result of the investigation; and
- Adequate records are kept of those matters covered by this Determination and ensuring those records are accessible to the Ombudsman for auditing purposes under section 25B of the Act; and
- The Ombudsman is provided within one month of the end of the months of June and December of each year, with the total number of allegations exempted from notification to the Ombudsman under the provisions of this Determination.

Child Protection (ACT) Responding to Complaints Against Employees

Employee

For the purposes of this policy means any person engaged either by the school or the Catholic Education Office for any work or activities of the school or Catholic Education Office that relates to children and includes any individual engaged by the agency to provide services to children (including in the capacity of a volunteer).

Employer

For the purposes of this policy means the Director of Catholic Education or the Director's delegate. The school Principal may be delegated to assume particular roles on behalf of the Director.

Ill-treatment

Ill-treatment of a child occurs where an employee disciplines or corrects a child in excess of what is reasonable or appropriate for the situation. Any punishment administered by a person in authority that [unreasonably] restricts a child's freedom or makes excessive and unreasonable demands on them amounts to ill treatment.⁶

Inquiry

An inquiry into a complaint includes any preliminary or other inquiry into, or examination of, the matter.

Neglect

Under the *Children and Young People Act 1999* (ACT) **neglect** of a child or a young person, means a failure to provide the child or young person with a necessity of life that has caused, is causing or is likely to cause the child or young person significant harm to his or her wellbeing or development.

Examples of necessities of life: Food, shelter, clothing and medical care.

Physical assault

Physical assault involves a '**hostile act**' by the employee towards the child. The assault occurs regardless of the employee's intention to harm the young person or child and regardless of the child's consent. Assault can include pushing, shoving, hitting, smacking, threatening behaviour (verbal or actions) that causes the child to fear that an assault is likely to occur.

Physical assault of a child under common law principles, must include all three of the following elements:

- It is an act committed on or towards a child; **and**
- It involves either the application of force to a child **or** an act that causes a child to think that immediate force will be used on them; **and**
- It is either **hostile** or **reckless** (a reckless act is one where a person would reasonably foresee the consequence of or likelihood of inflicting injury or fear, and ignores the risk).

Actual physical harm does not have to occur in order for assault to have occurred. Physical contact which is an inevitable or accepted part of everyday life does not amount to an assault.

⁶ NSW Ombudsman, *Child Protection in the Workplace: Responding to Allegations Against Employees* pp 39 - 40

Child Protection (ACT) Responding to Complaints Against Employees

Psychological Harm

Psychologically harmful behaviour is behaviour that results in significant harm or trauma to a child. There needs to be a causal link between the inappropriate behaviour and the harm.

For a matter to involve reportable conduct of psychological harm, the following must be present:

- a description of persistent and targeted behaviour, eg. Scapegoating, humiliation or verbal abuse – although in rare cases the alleged behaviour may be a single incident which is extreme and harmful to a child;
- signs of harm, eg. displaying patterns of ‘out of character behaviour’ such as refusal to attend school, sleep disturbances, anxiety, physical symptoms, self harm; **and**
- an alleged causal link between the behaviour and the harm⁷.

Reportable Allegation

A reportable allegation means an allegation of reportable conduct against a person or an allegation of misconduct that may involve reportable conduct.⁸

Where the behaviour suggests that the allegation:

- a. may be a pattern of behaviour; or
- b. may indicate misconduct which poses a significant risk to children.

This includes breaches of boundaries of code of conduct, inappropriate use of power relationship, targeting children for specialised treatment, inappropriate touching (but not sexual), inappropriate relationship (not sexual) between an adult and a child that breaches community standards, taking children home in breach of agency guidelines.

Reportable Conduct

For the purposes of this policy, reportable conduct is the conduct so defined by the *Ombudsman Act 1974* (NSW). This definition is included to assist determination of the level of response required by the Principal and the Catholic Education Office. Complaints which meet the definition of “Reportable Conduct” and which do not attract an exemption will normally be managed by a Human Resources Officer.

Reportable conduct means:

- (a) “any sexual offence, or sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of a child (including a child pornography offence); or
- (b) any assault, ill treatment or the neglect of a child; or
- (c) any behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child, whether or not, in any case, with the consent of the child;

whether or not, in any case with the consent of the child.

Reportable conduct does not extend to:

- (a) conduct that is reasonable for the purposes of the discipline, management or care of children, having regard to the age, maturity, health or other characteristics of the children and to any relevant codes of conduct or professional standards; or

⁷ NSW Ombudsman, *Child Protection in the Workplace: Responding to Allegations Against Employees* pp 41-42

⁸ NSW Ombudsman, *Child Protection in the Workplace: Responding to Allegations Against Employees* p 47

Child Protection (ACT) Responding to Complaints Against Employees

- (b) the use of physical force that in all the circumstances, is trivial or negligible, but only if the matter is to be investigated and the result of the investigation recorded under workplace employment procedures; or
- (c) conduct of a Class or Kind exempted from being reportable conduct by the Ombudsman under s25A.

Young Person

Under the *Children and Young People Act 1999 (ACT)*, a young person is a person who is **12 years old or older, but not yet an adult**.

Procedures

The Principal, in consultation with a Human Resources Officer, will determine whether a complaint is of a matter which should be managed by a CEO Human Resources Officer.

In **all** cases the procedures outlined in this policy must be reasonably followed according to the particular facts and circumstances of each complaint.

1. Record the Complaint

The Principal, or person receiving the complaint, records in writing information from the complainant using the person's exact words and advises that the complaint will be acted upon. In recording the complaint the Principal or other person receiving the complaint notes WHO is involved, WHAT happened, WHEN did it happen, WHERE did it happen, HOW did it happen.

It is important that this initial step is not rushed. The Principal should take time to read over the information and ensure that the notes taken are an accurate statement of the information received from the complainant.

2. Confer with the Human Resources Officer

The Principal must inform their Human Resources Officer of the initial details of the complaint. Together they determine action to be taken based on the following questions:

Q: Is this a complaint which should be managed by the CEO? The Principal and HR Officer may use the NSW standard to assess whether the complaint is of level or sensitivity which requires CEO involvement. The Principal may make some preliminary enquiries to assist this determination.

A: If it determined that the complaint is a low level matter, it should be resolved at school level using modified procedures from this policy and the **School Level Response Flowchart**. All relevant information including details of the complaint, signed transcripts of interviews, correspondence, recommendations and findings are forwarded to the CEO for secure filing.

If it **is** a higher-level complaint or a sensitive issue, the resolution of the complaint will be managed by a HR Officer using procedures outlined in this policy.

Q: Are there reasonable grounds to suspect a child is at current risk of harm? Are there reasonable grounds to suspect that the employee or employee's colleagues are at risk? What risks are there to the school, to confidentiality or to the resolution of the complaint?

Child Protection (ACT) Responding to Complaints Against Employees

A: A risk assessment is made. Appropriate decisions must be made to respond to any perceived risk.

In the ACT, the Children and Young People Act 1999 (ACT), legally requires teachers, counsellors and carers as mandated people, to report to Family Services when they have formed a *reasonable suspicion that a child or young person has suffered or is suffering sexual abuse or non accidental physical injury*. Although the law requires that teachers and counsellors notify physical and sexual abuse, these guidelines also apply to the other categories of abuse.

Section 159 of the Act legally requires mandated persons to report to Family Services when the abuse of children falls under the following categories:

- Non accidental injuries as a result of physical abuse.
- Neglect resulting in impairment to health.
- Emotional abuse causing psychological harm and /or emotional damage.
- Sexual abuse and exploitation.

Failure by a mandated person to report the abuse of a child or young person may result in a **fine or imprisonment for 6 months or both**.

If the HR Officer or Principal is unsure when making assessments regarding notification to Family Services, he or she should seek advice from the Head of Human Resources or from the ACT Family Services (Northern Line on 6207 1069; Southern Line 6207 1466).

- If a report is made to Family Services or to the Police, no investigation is conducted by the school or the CEO without first consulting Family Services or the Police.
- If Family Services investigates an employee of the CEO, the process is managed by the Head of Human Resources.

3. The Parents/Guardians of the child are notified.

The parents/guardians of the child will be advised by the School Principal that the complaint has been received and that the investigation process has commenced. In high level complaints notification should also be confirmed in writing. A sample letter advising parents/guardians of the complaint will be provided by Human Resources.

It is important that the notification to parents occurs as close as possible to the notification to the employee (Step 5).

4. The Investigation Process is Planned

The Principal and the HR Officer, having regard to the nature of the complaint and particular school / community characteristics, plan the investigation in line with the system protocol.

An investigator (or panel of 2 investigators) will be appointed by the Principal / HR Officer.

The investigation objectives should be clarified and established.

Any relevant documentation relating to the complaint should be compiled.

Witnesses should be identified and consent obtained from parents for child witnesses to be interviewed.

A timeframe for conducting interviews should be drafted.

A draft investigation plan, signed by the Principal, will be faxed to the Head of Human Resources within 36 hours of receiving the complaint.

Child Protection (ACT) Responding to Complaints Against Employees

5. Principal and staff member meet.

Principal meets briefly with staff member to:

- inform the employee that a complaint has been received and to advise the employee of the general nature of the complaint i.e. sexual assault, misconduct that may involve a breach of the Code of Conduct, physical assault, behaviour causing psychological harm;
- give the employee a copy of this policy and the “Responding to allegations of child abuse and other CCYP – notifiable matters” Protocol;
- inform the employee of the investigative procedure and the timeline for bringing the matter to completion;
- inform the employee of the names of the members of the investigating panel. The employee is informed that he or she may raise any issues or concerns regarding the composition of the investigating panel. (The Principal and the HR Officer will together consider and seek resolution of any such issues raised by the employee before the investigation commences);
- ask the employee if he or she wishes to nominate any witnesses to the alleged incident to be interviewed during the investigation;
- inform the employee that as soon as information is gathered a meeting will be held with the employee to fully inform the employee of the complaint. The employee may choose to have a support person present at that meeting. If the staff member elects to have a union organiser at the meeting a CEO Officer may be appointed to attend the meeting;
- offer the employee adequate support including an offer of counselling at no cost to the employee and, if the staff member wishes, a support person at the school or CEO who can assist them through the process.

The employee also receives this advice in writing.

6. Staff member may make an initial response

In some cases the staff member may wish to acknowledge that the complaint is true. An admission that the complaint is true should be recorded in writing, signed and dated by the employee. No further investigation may be required, the Principal/HR Officer proceeds with step 9.

The staff member may request an interview early in the process in order to clarify procedural matters or to provide initial information. The Principal and the HR Officer managing the case must consider the staff member’s request for an early interview. Arranging an early interview will not preclude the holding of the later interview outlined in step 9 below.

7. Interviewing witnesses and gathering information

Using the draft investigation plan as a guide the investigator(s) proceeds to gather relevant information.

The need for confidentiality must be stressed with all witnesses and parties concerned.

Investigators must have concern for the developmental stage of child witnesses. Questions should be planned in advance keeping in mind what information the interviewer is seeking or seeking to assess or clarify. Questions should be open and not leading. Investigators may need to re-interview witnesses to clarify as far as possible inconsistencies in recall of facts between witnesses.

Child witnesses should not be interviewed formally without parental permission. Parents may be present for the interview but may not participate unless directed by the investigators.

Child Protection (ACT) Responding to Complaints Against Employees

Records of interview should be read, signed and dated by the witness. If the witness refuses to sign the record of interview the investigators should document both the request and the refusal. If the witness disputes the accuracy of the record of interview, he or she should be asked to indicate in writing what he or she believes was actually said.

8. The employee is interviewed and responds to the complaint.

Following information gathering and clarification of facts the investigator(s) are able to present the complaint to the employee for his or her response.

The employee must be given reasonable notice of the time and location of the interview.

The employee will be advised of the identity of the alleged victim except where the employer has compelling reason not to disclose the identity; such compelling reasons must be comprehensively documented.

The identity of the notifier should not be automatically disclosed to the employee or witnesses interviewed during the investigation unless:

- the notifier consents in writing to disclosure of his / her identity; or
- the disclosure of the identity of the notifier is necessary to investigate the matter effectively; or
- the making of the complaint is found to be malicious or vexatious.

During the interview the employee must be fully informed of the information that has come to the investigators regarding the complaint. The employee must be given every opportunity to respond to the complaint and any information adverse to his or her interest. The employee may be questioned to seek further information or to clarify matters.

The employee should be given an opportunity, as soon as practicable, to read, verify / amend, date and sign a copy of the record of interview. If he or she refuses to do so, the investigator(s) should record both the request and the refusal.

9. Finding

9.1 Where the complaint concerns conduct that is “not reportable” i.e. a low risk matter

When all the information is gathered, the Principal will consider all available information and make a finding. It may be found that the alleged incident or conduct which generated the complaint:

- Did occur; **or**
- Did not occur; **or**
- Was justifiable in the circumstances; **or**
- Was misconceived by the complainant (i.e. where inquiries into the matter find that, even though the complaint was made in good faith, it was based on a misunderstanding of what actually happened).

The Principal may find that there is insufficient information available to conclusively determine whether the conduct did or did not occur.

The Principal will meet with the employee to outline the finding. The employee must be given the opportunity to respond to any adverse finding and to any disciplinary or support initiatives that the Principal intends to implement as a result of the finding.

In all cases, the employee should be given the opportunity to debrief regarding the complaint and the process used to resolve the complaint. An offering of counselling, at no

Child Protection (ACT) Responding to Complaints Against Employees

cost to the employee, should be made. Counselling will be arranged through the Head of Human Resources.

9.2 Where the complaint concerns conduct that is “reportable” i.e. a higher risk matter

When all the information is gathered the investigator(s) forwards all documentation to the Human Resources Officer. The investigator(s) does not make a finding but makes a report and recommendations. The Head of Human Resources is responsible for considering all available information and deciding whether, on the balance of probabilities, the alleged incident or conduct which generated the complaint:

- Did occur; **or**
- Did not occur; **or**
- Was justifiable in the circumstances; **or**
- Was misconceived by the complainant (i.e. where inquiries into the matter find that, even though the complaint was made in good faith, it was based on a misunderstanding of what actually happened).

The Head of Human Resources may find that there is insufficient information available to conclusively determine whether the conduct did or did not occur.

The Head of Human Resources may seek clarification and direct that further action occur to ensure that the relevant interests of the child and the employee are served.

10. If it is found that conduct which generated a high risk complaint did occur or if there is some evidence that it did occur, the employee is advised of the preliminary finding and proposed action by the employer.

The Head of Human Resources informs the employee of the preliminary finding.

The employee is provided with the opportunity to respond to an adverse finding within 10 working days.

The employee is advised of any proposed disciplinary action or support initiatives.

The employee is advised that she or he may request to view the file.

The employee is offered support including an offer of counselling at no cost to the employee and, if the staff member wishes, a support person who can assist debrief regarding the investigation.

This information is conveyed in writing.

11. Confirming a finding

The employee’s response to an adverse finding will be given due consideration.

The Head of Human Resources determines the finding, consulting where necessary with the Human Resources Officer managing the case and the Principal and advises the Principal of the finding.

The Head of Human Resources advises the employee in writing of:

- the finding;
- disciplinary action and / or support initiatives to be implemented;
- the procedures in place for storage of files in relation to this case;
- the employee’s right to ask to view the file;
- the availability of support and/or counselling.

Child Protection (ACT) Responding to Complaints Against Employees

12. Parents are notified of the conclusion of the process.

At the conclusion of the process, the parents/guardians of the child who was the alleged victim of the notification are informed that the investigation process has been completed. Generally, parents/guardians are not entitled to know the outcome of the investigation. Findings are confidential to employer and employee. Further parental enquiries regarding investigations or findings should be directed to the Head of Human Resources.

13. The File is closed

The following documentation will usually be required before the file is closed:

- information recording the complaint;
- draft investigation plan;
- letter advising the employee of the complaint and inviting the employee to a meeting;
- letter advising parents/guardians of child of the commencement of the investigation process;
- employee's response to the complaint (if written);
- all meeting records signed and dated;
- all statements (witnesses etc) signed and dated;
- letter advising employee of the preliminary finding (**usually only required for higher level complaints**);
- any documentation detailing a response from the employee (if relevant);
- letter advising the employee of the determination (final finding) and any intended disciplinary action by the employer (**usually only required for higher level complaints**);
- letter advising parent / guardian of the conclusion of the investigation process;
- relevant e-mails and memos.

14. Apologies

With the commencement of the Civil Law (Wrongs) Act 2002 (ACT) on 1 November, 2002, in most cases the giving of an apology is no longer an admission of fault or liability. Part 2.3 of the Act provides that "an oral or written expression of sympathy or regret, or of a general sense of benevolence or compassion, in relation to an incident"⁹ "is not (and must not be taken to be) an express or implied admission of fault or liability by the person in relation to the incident; and is not relevant to deciding fault or liability in relation to the incident."¹⁰

The following text from the NSW Ombudsman's Child Protection Guidelines offers further information on offering apology to students, parents and employees.

"The most common instances where it would be appropriate for an apology to be given will be where conduct has not been of a standard expected by a school. If such behaviour does not constitute an intentional infliction of physical or sexual harm, then an apology may be given that not only expresses regret for the detriment suffered, but also provides some explanation for the way the situation occurred (eg accident, oversight, inadvertence, distraction, etc).

⁹ s 13 *Civil Law (Wrongs) Act 2002* (ACT)

¹⁰ s 14 *Civil Law (Wrongs) Act 2002* (ACT)

Child Protection (ACT) Responding to Complaints Against Employees

An agency should consider apologising (to the employee) for distress caused by an investigation into an allegation against an employee where the matter is not sustained and the employee suffered some detriment in the course of the investigation. An apology can express regret for that detriment. This can be done while still maintaining that the action causing the detriment (eg temporary transfer to other duties) was a necessary part of the investigation (which may also have been in the best interests of the employee).

Where an investigation has been conducted less than perfectly, for example, if the completion of the investigation was unnecessarily delayed or there was a breach of confidentiality or some other procedural error, an apology, including an explanation for the deficiency in the investigation, should be made for any detriment or distress caused.”¹¹

15. Dispute Resolution.

In the event of disputation about the investigation, determination of findings and disciplinary action, the employee is entitled to request that the particulars of the matters in dispute be referred to an appropriate means of dispute resolution.

16. Security of Records and Documentation

All documentation relating to complaints and ongoing investigations must be maintained in a secure and confidential environment with access restricted to the person conducting the inquiry and other authorised person(s).

Information regarding the complaint, investigation and finding should usually not be noted in any personal record maintained in relation to the employee. This means the information must be removed from any records or files such as personnel, student records or similar files. Such records should be forwarded to the CEO for confidential and secure storage: they must not be destroyed.

17. Employee’s access to investigation file

An employee may, subject to reasonable notice, apply to inspect the investigation file regarding a child protection complaint concerning him or her. Access may be granted to the investigation file’ prior to the completion of the investigation, in exceptional circumstances.

Before an employee is given access to the file advice from the Catholic Commission for Employment Relations should be sought regarding documents or parts of documents which must be excluded from employee access. Exclusions will be made to protect the identity of victims and notifiers and to ensure compliance with privacy and other legislation.

The employee, having inspected the file, may submit additional documentation that will be added to the investigation file by way of amendment, correction or clarification of information held on the file. If the employee contends that the additional or clarified information was relevant to the finding application for a review of the finding may be made.

18. Matters of Jurisdiction

Any matters of jurisdiction should be referred to the Human Resources Officer who will liaise with the Head of Human Resources and CCER regarding the matter.

¹¹ NSW Ombudsman, *Child Protection in the Workplace Responding to Allegations Against Employees* pp 13-14

Child Protection (ACT) Responding to Complaints Against Employees

References

- Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse and other CCYP Notifiable Matters Protocol www.ccer.cathcomm.org/ccer
- *Ombudsman Act 1974* (NSW) Part 3A http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/oa1974114/
- *Children and Young People Act 1999* (ACT) http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/act/consol_act/caypa1999242/
- *Civil Law (Wrongs) Act 2002* (ACT) http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/act/consol_act/cla2002194/
- NSW Ombudsman, *Child Protection in the Workplace Responding to Allegations Against Employees* http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/publications/Publist_pdfs/guidelines/Child%20Protection%20in%20the%20workplace1.pdf

Forms

Procedure Checklist (ACT)

Approved by:	CEO Heads of Division
Issuing Group:	Human Resources Division
Implementation Date:	1 May 2005
Supersedes Policy Dated:	Not applicable
Revision Date:	July 2008
CEO Contact Officer:	Principal Human Resources Officer: Child Protection & Legal Issues

Child Protection (ACT) Responding to Complaints Against Employees

Procedure Checklist

- The person receiving the notification records the complaint.
- HR Officer is notified
- Determination made as to whether this complaint will be managed at school level or at CEO level
- Determination made as to whether Family Services need to be notified
- Risk assessment made by the Principal & the HR Officer
- Investigation Plan is Drafted
- HR Officer receives Draft Investigation Plan
- Investigator(s) appointed
- Parents/guardians are informed of the complaint in writing.
- Letter to employee advising him/her of the complaint is drafted by the Principal / HR Officer.
- Principal meets with the employee to notify him / her of the complaint. Content of the meeting is confirmed by the Principal in writing.
- Permission is sought to interview child witnesses
- Information gathering. All statements are verified, signed and dated.
- Interview with employee – complaint is put to the employee. Interview is minuted, verified, signed and dated.
- Any signed written response to the complaint by the employee accepted.
- Information is compiled and forwarded to Head of Human Resources or Principal for preliminary finding.

Child Protection (ACT) Responding to Complaints Against Employees

- Employee informed of preliminary finding and (if sustained) invited to respond to finding and proposed disciplinary action.
- Head of Human Resources or Principal considers employee's response and makes final determination.
- Employee informed of final finding
- Parents informed of completion of process
- File completed and filed in accordance with policy