

Understanding Risk and Applying the Child Safe Standards in Family Day Care

Warning: These case studies discuss child abuse and the content may be distressing to some participants. Crisis support services can be reached 24 hours a day: Lifeline 13 11 14, Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636 and Mental Health Line 1800 011 511.

This case study is fictional and has been developed based on research from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse, literature reviews and information based on organisational abuse in NSW. It has been designed as a reflective exercise to assist Family Day Care (FDC) service providers assess how rigorous their child safe practices are, and how the Standards can be used to strengthen existing practices and review what gaps there may be in practice that need to be addressed.

Please use the reflective boxes to answer questions and write down your comments. These will be integrated into the risk webinar.

Background

Kids First Family Day Care Service Provider has 15 educators they support in their area. There has been an increasing demand for family day care places because of recent growth in the neighbouring suburbs. In response to the demand, Kids First recruited several new educators, including Sally who has a few years' experience but has changed service providers since moving to a new town.

During recruitment, Kids First conducted an interview with Sally, requested her WWC number, ran police checks and conducted reference checks. They then visited Sally's home to assess the suitability of the physical environment to provide a service to children. Sally lives in a free-standing home and the back room of the home is the main space for the children which flows onto a large backyard.

Sally provided the names of all household members, which included her de facto partner, Joe, and her mother, Debbie. Debbie is present in the home when the children are there and sometimes does activities like baking with Sally and the children. Joe is home for a few hours in the afternoon while children are still in care. Sally told Kids First that both household members were checked and approved at the last provider and she would send this information through.

Sally provided documentation that she recently did refresher first aid and mandatory reporting courses so was ready to start providing services to children ASAP. Kids First asked Sally to complete the online induction modules before she started.

Kids First prioritised household member checks for the new, less experienced educators and directed coordinator support to the new educators. Sally gained approval to start providing a service the following week.

Reflective comments: *What are your views on the recruitment process? What was done well and what could have been done better? How do you prioritise the administrative steps in recruitment and the support for your educators? What do you include in your induction process?*

Have you compared your recruitment process against other FDC service providers in your area? Have you assessed your recruitment process against the Standards using the [Guide to the Child Safe Standards](#)?

Incident

Sally has four children accessing her family day care. She has two-year-old twins, one three-year-old child and one four-year-old child.

One afternoon, Sally's mother becomes ill with a migraine and needs some medication to manage her nausea and vision loss. Joe has just arrived home from work and is eating afternoon tea in the yard where the twins and three-year-old are playing. The other children have already been picked up by their parents.

Sally decides to run to the shops to get some migraine medication for her mother and some fruit for the children's afternoon tea. The shops are two blocks from her home so she asks Joe to supervise the children in the yard while she goes out for 15 minutes.

When Sally arrives home she notices the three-year-old girl is crying and asks what is wrong. Joe tells Sally the girl had a fall. Sally comforts the girl and gives the children afternoon tea.

Reflective comments: *Can you relate to this situation? Have you managed new or very experienced staff that have left children for periods of time with household members? How would you manage this supervision breach? What action would you take to address breaches in supervision? What mechanisms do you have in place to ensure educators understand supervision requirements and comply with them? *The reflective questions [in the handbook](#) can help you reflect on the support and ongoing education you provide to your educators and help you see where you may need to strengthen practices.*

Allegation

The following day Kids First receive a call from the three-year-old girl's parents informing them that their daughter told them Joe touched their daughter inappropriately. The little girl told her parent's 'Joe touched my flower' which is what she calls her vagina. Kids First told the mother not to worry, they would follow up with the educator immediately.

Kids First spoke to Sally on the phone and Sally was very upset saying it could not have happened. Sally disclosed she did leave the home for 10 minutes but Joe was not alone with the children, her mother was also home but unwell. Sally explained why she left for a short period of time. Kids First told Sally she is not allowed to leave the children but believed her that it was unlikely to have occurred and would support her.

Kids First called the parents back and said they would do some more training with the educator in light of the complaint. The parents told Kids First they were not satisfied with the response and would be removing their daughter from the service.

The parents called the NSW Department of Education Regulatory Authority to lodge a complaint and called the police. The NSW Regulatory Authority informed the parents they would follow up with Kids First.

The NSW Regulatory Authority and the police contacted Kids First and the educator. They advised that Kids First should report the allegation to the Office of the Children's Guardian, as it was a regulatory requirement as part of the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Reflective comments: *How would you have responded to this parent’s call? Do your policies and procedures adequately describe how you need to respond? What is the culture of your organisation – is it to believe the child or protect the organisation’s reputation and income flow? How would you support the child and family? How would you support the educator?*

**The reflective questions [in the handbook](#) can help you reflect on the support and ongoing education you provide to your educators and help you see where you may need to strengthen practices.*

What if the little girl told Sally ‘Joe touched her flower’ but Sally missed this disclosure as she didn’t know the little girl calls her vagina a flower? What if the little girl started presenting with sexualised behaviours?

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