

**INTRODUCTION**

BDCS aims to value, support and maintain 'child-safe' services that promote safety, protection and best practice. In order to provide effective support and referral it may be necessary to exchange information with other prescribed bodies including government agencies or non-government organisations and services. Information exchange plays an important part in promoting child protection.

Chapter 16A of the NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 requires prescribed bodies to take reasonable steps to coordinate decision making and the delivery of services regarding children and young people, including the exchange of information. The information requested or provided must relate to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the child. Information includes:

1. A child or young person's history or circumstances
2. A parent or other family member, significant or relevant relationship
3. The agency's work now and in the past

**OVERALL GOALS – What are we going to do?**

BDCS will exchange information that relates to a child or young person's safety, welfare or wellbeing, whether or not the child or young person is known to Community Services and whether or not the child or young person consents to the information exchange.

**OVERALL STRATEGIES – How will it be done?****For information required from BDCS**

- All requests for information exchange from another service provider/agency are to be in the form of a written request. This will be checked using the Communities and Justice "Checklist for receiving information under chapter 16A" (see link in sources).
- Should the checklist deem it acceptable to share information, information given by BDCS staff will use the suggested formats from Communities and Justice "Letter for agreeing to a Chapter 16A request" and "Letter for providing information under chapter 16A" (see link in sources).
- Should the checklist deem it unacceptable to share information, BDCS staff will use the suggested format from Communities and Justice "Letter declining a Chapter 16A request" to communicate this result (see link in sources).
- Copies of all requests and information given will be placed in the child's file. This information will include the date of the exchange of information, the person and service the information was exchanged to and any other relevant details.
- Staff should ask for assistance from the Nominated Supervisor and/or the Executive Officer if unsure of any of the above procedures.

**For information required for BDCS**

- All requests for information exchange from a BDCS service to another service provider/agency are use the suggested format from Communities and Justice "Letter requesting information under chapter 16A" (see link in sources).
- When information is received, the Communities and Justice "Checklist for receiving information under Chapter 16A" will be used prior to the information shared within the organisation (see link in sources).
- All information provided by the other service provider/agency will be kept in the child's file.

- Staff should ask for assistance from the Nominated Supervisor and/or the General Manager if unsure of any of the above procedures.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **The Approved Provider will:**

- Advise children, young people and their families that information may be shared with other organisations upon enrolment at BDCS.
- Where possible, attempt to gain consent to share information relating to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children or young people.
- Ensure that information is managed in a sensitive way.
- Store information in a secure and confidential manner.

### **Nominated Supervisors will:**

- Follow the Communities and Justice Guidelines for exchanging information under Chapter 16A.
- Where possible, attempt to gain consent to share information relating to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children or young people.
- Ensure that information is managed in a sensitive way.
- Store information in a secure and confidential manner.

### **Educators will:**

- Communicate with the Nominated Supervisor when there is a need to request the exchange of information or when they have received a request for information.
- Assist the Nominated Supervisor to follow the procedures outlined above to ensure a sensitive and appropriate approach to information exchange.

## **MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

*This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this Policy every 18 months. Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.*

*In accordance with R. 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.*

## **RELATED LEGISLATION**

- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (the Act)

## **LINKS TO:**

- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children - Standard 2.2

## **SOURCES**

- Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW (2008):  
<https://www.theirfuturesmatter.nsw.gov.au/about-us/other-reforms/keep-them-safe>

- Exchanging information related to child protection and wellbeing – Communities and Justice:  
<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/interagency-guidelines/exchanging-information>

**Policy Revision History**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Authorised By</i>	<i>Description of Amendments</i>	<i>Sections affected</i>
Jan 2021	P. Ritchie – GM		

- **Review Date: Jan 2022**