

Child Safe Environment Policy

Commitment to the safety of children and young people

We are committed to providing a safe environment to all children and young people. Our policy complies with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 and aligns with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

We value and respect children and young people and welcome them regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, or social economic or cultural background. Bullying and harassment won't be tolerated.

Scope of policy

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, work placement students and contractors referred to throughout the policy collectively as workers.

All workers are required to agree in writing to accept and act in accordance with the policy.

Communication

This child safe policy and related documents are available to children, young people and their families on our website, on request and provided as part of a welcome pack at the first visit

This child safe policy and related documents are provided to all workers as part of their induction following recruitment.

We encourage and respect the views of children and young people and involve them in decision making as appropriate. We provide clear age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate explanations to children and young people including their right to safety, their right to be listened to and that they can provide feedback or make a complaint if they have a concern, to any worker or ask their parent/guardian to do this on their behalf. We will listen to and act upon any complaints or concerns that a child or young person raises with us.

Code of Conduct

Caring for children and young people brings additional responsibilities for all workers. We are responsible for promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by:

- sticking to the organisation's child safe policy at all times and taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people
- treating everyone including those of different race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes and religious beliefs with respect and honesty and ensure equity is upheld
- being a positive role model to children and young people in all conduct with them
- setting clear boundaries and maintaining appropriate behaviours with children and young people – boundaries help everyone to understand their roles
- listening and responding appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people
- being alert to bullying behaviours and responding promptly and appropriately
- ensuring another adult is always present or in sight when conducting one to one consulting, coaching, instruction or other activity
- being alert to children and young people who have been harmed, or may be at risk of harm and reporting this quickly to the Child Abuse Report Line (13 14 78)
- responding quickly, fairly and transparently to any complaints made by a child, young person or their parent/guardian
- encouraging children and young people to 'have a say' on issues that are important to them.

Workers must not:

- engage in rough physical games
- develop any 'special' relationships with children and young people that could be seen as favouritism such as the offering of gifts or special treatment
- do things of a personal nature that a child or young person can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- discriminate against any child or young person because of age, gender, cultural background, religion, vulnerability or sexuality.

Breaches or suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct should be reported as soon as practicable to management either in person, by telephone on 82953076 or via email at

info@yourwaydisabilitysa.com.au. Breaches or suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct will be taken seriously and dealt with quickly, fairly and transparently.

Any worker who breaches the Code of Conduct will face disciplinary action and depending on severity of the breach, the worker may have their employment terminated.

Recruitment

To ensure we engage the most suitable people to work with children and young people we have the following recruitment practices in place:

- our commitment to child safety is included in all job advertisements
- clear position descriptions that include our commitment to child safety and wellbeing
- face-to-face interviews that use behavioural questions to determine the applicant's knowledge of child safeguarding
- at least 2 referee checks and qualification checks.

In accordance with the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016, our organisation is registered with the DHS Screening Unit and we link all Working with Children Checks (WWCC). All workers over the age of 14 years who will be working in a role with children and young people must hold a current, not prohibited WWCC issued by the Screening Unit of the Department of Human Services and provide evidence of this prior to employment and renew this every 5 years. We will verify the accuracy of all WWCCs in the DHS Screening Unit portal as required by law.

We will immediately contact the Department of Human Services Screening Unit when we become aware of assessable information regarding any person involved with our organisation, including any serious criminal offence, child protection information, or disciplinary or misconduct information.

Training, supervision and support for workers

We have strategies in place to supervise, train and support workers to understand our organisation's child safe policy, their mandatory reporting obligations, how to build culturally safe environments and their responsibilities to create a child safe and friendly environment. Our strategies include:

Training:

as part of their induction, ensure all workers read and understand the Mandatory Reporting Information Booklet available at: https://dhs.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/103179/CSE-Mandatory-notification-information-booklet.PDF
complete 'Safe Environments Through their eyes' or 'Responding to Risk of Harm, Abuse and Neglect' training every 3 years include child safety as a standing item on meeting agendas

Supervision:

regular supervision sessions that include a focus on child safety and wellbeing

Support:

an induction process for all new workers including a copy of this policy document

regular performance appraisals that discuss child safeguarding

appointing a child safety officer who has an educative role within our organisation.

Reporting and responding to harm or risk of harm

We aim to ensure that children and young people are safe from harm and risk of harm. Section 17 of the Safety Act defines 'harm' to mean physical or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission), including harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect.

Mandated reporters in our organisation are workers who:

- provide services to children and young people
- hold a management position in the organisation the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of those services to children and young people.

Mandated reporters have a legal obligation to report the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 as soon as practicable if they have a suspicion that a child or young person has been harmed or may be at risk of harm. If the child or young person is at immediate risk, report to South Australia Police (SAPOL) on 000.

Even if not a mandated reporter, any person can report harm or risk of harm to a child or young person. The individual who identifies the harm or risk of harm is encouraged to make the report to authorities and can request the support from another worker to do so if required.

Information about making appropriate reports of harm or risk of harm is available from the South Australian

Department for Child Protection website: <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse>.

All adult workers (even if not a mandated reporter) have a legal obligation to report child sexual abuse to the police and to protect a child from sexual abuse. Failure to meet these obligations may be considered a criminal offence.

Following a report being made to CARL or SAPOL workers must make an internal report to management.

We will be guided by the Department for Child Protection and/or SAPOL after a report has been made as to whether we can conduct an internal investigation.

If a worker is reported to CARL or SAPOL for causing harm or risk of harm to a child or young person, they will be removed from any role that involves working with any child or young person until authorities have concluded their investigation.

Following a report to CARL or SAPOL we will support the child or young person by:

- referring the child, young person or their family to other appropriate services
- continuing to provide a service to the child, young person and their family and monitor their circumstances.

We will document all information received regarding the report and store this securely in a separate file.

Reporting and responding to general complaints or feedback

Providing opportunities for complaints and feedback ensures that children, young people and their families feel valued and respected and enables us to improve the quality of our service. Children, young people and their families are informed that they can provide feedback or make a complaint at their first appointment or as part of their welcome pack when they join the organisation.

Compliments, complaints or feedback can be provided verbally to any worker or direct to management either by telephone on 82953076 via email at info@yourwaydisabilitysa.com.au

We will deal with all complaints and feedback received promptly, sensitively and fairly. We will:

- listen to the complaint/feedback
- the person receiving the complaint will make a record of it if received verbally
- advise of the time expected for an outcome
- if a worker receives a complaint, they must forward it to management as soon as possible
- management will respond to the complainant with an outcome in a timely manner
- clearly document and securely store decisions and actions taken in response to complaints and feedback
- make sure that procedural fairness is followed at all times.

If the child, young person or their family is not happy with the outcome from the complaints process they can contact:

- Child Safety Officer: Paul Cooke (Director, YWDSA, 0416 465 437)
- Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner 8226 8666
- Australian Human Rights Commission Online: www.humanrights.gov.au Tel: 1300 656 419
- South Australian Equal Opportunities Commission (for complaints relating to discrimination) Online: www.eoc.sa.gov.au Tel: 08 8207 1977

Risk management

Identified risk	Actions to minimise risk
Physical contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any physical contact must be appropriate to the delivery of services being provided • where physical contact is required, this is undertaken in a safe way by explaining why contact is required and what will happen, and asking the child/young person for their permission (or their family if this is more appropriate) before proceeding • unnecessary physical contact is not allowed
Online communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cyber safety and social media guidelines are in place and provided to all workers • appropriate supervision is provided for all online activities • workers must not communicate with children or young people via social media
Transport of children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workers must not transport a child or young person unless specifically approved • parents/guardians must provide consent before transporting a child or young person • worker must have a valid, unrestricted driver's licence • vehicle must be registered, insured and in roadworthy condition

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> worker must not be alone in a vehicle with a child or young person
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> children and young people are to be supervised by parents/guardians at all times if child/young person not collected by parent/guardian at end of consult/class/training two adults are to stay with child/young person until they are collected if providing one to one consultation with a child or young person, it will be in line of sight of another adult
Taking images of children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consent of child young person and their parent/guardian required disclosure will be made as to how the image is to be used and consent must be provided by the child, young person and parent/guardian images must be presented in a way that de-identifies the child or young person
Physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain a risk register that is reviewed annually to ensure effectiveness conduct risk assessments for all activities ensure all equipment is in good working order
Privacy and confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all documents containing confidential information will be stored privately in a locked filing cabinet (or similar place with restricted access) digital files containing confidential information shall be protected electronically by restricting the access to only those requiring it to perform their duties workers must not disclose information regarding any child or young person without written consent of the child, young person and their parent/guardian
Overnight and/or off-site activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consent of parent or guardian must be given children and young people must be supervised by a minimum of 2 adults of the same gender as the children attending privacy when children or young people are bathing, toileting and dressing must be provided children and young people will not be left under the supervision of unauthorised persons sleeping arrangements will not compromise the safety of children or young people such as unsupervised sleeping arrangements, or children or young people sharing a bed or an adult sleeping in the same bed as a child or young person in the event of billeting arrangements, host adults should have a child or young person attending the same event from the same household, and have a not prohibited WWCC children and young people have the right to contact their parents, or another adult, if they feel unsafe, uncomfortable, or distressed during the stay
Change room requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a minimum of two adults of the same gender as the children or young people must be present supervision will be provided ensuring the child or young person's right to privacy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">adults must not shower or change whilst supervising children or young peoplephones, cameras and recording devices must not be used in change room
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Breach of Policy

Your Way Disability SA (YWDSA) is committed to maintaining a child-safe environment in all aspects of service delivery. Any breach of this policy, whether intentional or unintentional, can have serious consequences for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in our care.

What Constitutes a Breach?

A breach of the Child Safe Environment Policy may include, but is not limited to:

- Failure to follow child protection procedures, including reporting concerns or disclosures.
- Engaging in inappropriate behavior towards a child or young person.
- Failure to comply with legal and regulatory requirements, including mandatory reporting obligations.
- Failure to uphold duty of care responsibilities, placing a child at risk of harm.
- Breach of professional boundaries, including inappropriate communication or relationships with children.
- Failure to maintain confidentiality, where sensitive information about a child is disclosed without authorisation.

Consequences of a Breach

A breach of this policy may result in:

- Formal warnings or written notices.
- Mandatory retraining on child protection and safeguarding.
- Temporary or permanent suspension from duties.
- Termination of employment, contract, or volunteer agreement where a breach is deemed serious.
- Referral to law enforcement or child protection authorities, if necessary.
- Legal action, where applicable, in accordance with relevant South Australian and Australian child protection laws.

Policy review

We will, at a minimum, review this policy and the related procedures once per year as required by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017. We will also review this policy when:

- new or added risks are identified for children or young people, which may require a change in the policy or procedures
- a critical incident where a child or young person has experienced harm through involvement in the organisation
- concerns are raised by anyone involved in your organisation about child safety or welfare in the organisation
- awareness or compliance to the child safe policy and/or procedures is low
- legislative changes/requirements.

We will lodge a new child safe environments compliance statement with the Department of Human Services each time we review and update this policy.