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## CHILD SAFE POLICY & PROCEDURES

### Introduction

The protection of children, one of the most vulnerable groups in society, is a shared community responsibility and involves ensuring that all children are safe, their needs are met and the possibility of child abuse is minimised.

This policy sets out the minimum safety framework and environments that Red Hen Speech Pathology (RHSP) adheres to. It is written to demonstrate our strong commitment to establishing and maintaining child safe environments, and is aligned with legislation and children's rights.

- Children and young people have the right to be safe from harm, neglect, abuse, coercion, or exploitation and develop physically, intellectually and socially with dignity.
- Child protection is the responsibility of the whole community. The community needs to provide safety systems and practices to minimise risks and respond appropriately when children have been harmed or are at risk of harm.
- Red Hen Speech Pathology has a responsibility and moral obligation to support the health, safety and wellbeing of all children by taking reasonable care to protect children from foreseeable harm.
- Red Hen Speech Pathology child safe practices are built upon risk prevention. The emphasis is on the child, young person or family receiving a service.

### Policy

Staff of Red Hen Speech Pathology have a moral, ethical and legal responsibility to ensure that all children (and vulnerable adults) are safe in their care. RHSP staff will adhere to practices which establish and maintain a therapeutic environment which ensures that children and young people are protected and feel respected, valued and safe.

RHSP staff are committed to:

- ensuring that the health, safety and wellbeing of children and young people in contact with the practice are protected at all times
- protecting children and young people from any reasonable, foreseeable risk of injury or harm
- supporting the rights of all children and young people to feel safe, and be safe, at all times

### Definitions

A **child safe environment** is a safe and friendly setting where children and young people are protected and feel respected; valued and encouraged to reach their full potential; and are heard.

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## Scope

This policy applies to all employees and persons involved with Red Hen Speech Pathology, including the Director, employees, volunteers, students, children, young people, parents, guardians and families.

## Principles

Red Hen Speech Pathology is committed to protecting children and proactively implements the National Child Safe Principles to enhance the overall experiences of children we engage with, balancing the focus on child safety with continued positive interactions and environments that contribute to healthy development.

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focussed.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

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## Procedures

### Empowering children to participate

1. All staff will create warm, inviting and friendly environments for therapy.
2. All staff will encourage and support children and young people. They will provide positive encouragement and specific, constructive feedback in a non-judgemental manner.
3. All staff will ensure that therapy tasks are building on the individual's strengths, interests and capabilities so that the child or young person experiences a sense of purpose and achievement.
4. All staff will communicate with children and young people in an age appropriate and respectful manner.
5. Children and young people will be given opportunities to provide feedback and actively participate in decision making regarding those decisions that affect them.
6. Alternative and augmentative communication strategies will be used when appropriate to empower children and young people to develop communicative competence and autonomy, rather than to insist on compliance.
7. Children and young people's preferences regarding mode of communication will be acknowledged.
8. Intervention should be functionally relevant to the child or young person and they must also be enabled to express their views on what they identify as relevant.
9. Children and young people will be asked for their consent before providing therapeutic physical prompts.
10. The use of restrictive practices will be avoided unless necessary to ensure the safety of the client or others, in accordance with their documented behaviour support plan. Any use of restrictive practices will be documented.
11. The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged. The speech pathologist will assess each child's needs and identify opportunities to build relationships. Therapy intervention will include development of skills necessary to establish and maintain healthy peer relationships.
12. Children and young people using AAC are given access to and taught the vocabulary needed to discuss topics of safety, health and wellbeing (consistent with their age, cognition and language functioning).
13. The speech pathologist may provide accessible information to children and young people that is appropriate for their age, cognition and communication skills, to assist development of their understanding regarding personal safety, protective behaviours, respectful relationships, sexuality and sexual development/puberty, bullying, coercive control and abuse.

### Involving family and community

1. Staff will ensure that children are adequately supervised during direct therapy sessions.
2. Staff will ensure the presence of/inclusion of parent/guardian or primary support person (school staff, guardian) at all times unless there is a compelling reason not to do this.
3. Where the parent/guardian or primary support person is not present in the room, doors are kept open and visual and/or at a minimum auditory monitoring must be ensured.

4. If upon arrival at a home for an appointment, a supervising adult is not present, the appointment will be cancelled and the cost of the appointment and travel will be charged.
5. Upon commencement of services, clarification regarding the current living/custody arrangements of each child or young person will be sought. This may include a request for copies of relevant court orders or parenting agreements to ensure that RHSP complies with its legal obligations regarding confidentiality and child safety.
6. For a child aged 0-16yrs a copy of each progress note will be sent to the parent/guardian following each appointment. For young people 16+yrs, progress notes will be sent to the young person and may also be shared with their parent/guardian as agreed.
7. Barriers that may prevent child/family community participation are identified and addressed.
8. Where appropriate, families are provided with information or referral to support services which may be available to them.
9. Therapy services will be delivered primarily in the family home or community setting including child care or school.
10. Where therapy services are provided to school aged children, consent will be sought from parents/guardians to enable collaboration and sharing of information with their child's school and teacher.
11. Parents and carers are encouraged and supported to talk to their children about safety and wellbeing.
12. Parents and carers are encouraged to share any concerns they may have about the child or young person with their therapist or the Director.
13. If there are concerns regarding the health, behaviour, treatment of, or disclosures made by a child or young person, these concerns will be raised with the parent/guardian unless there is concern that this may increase the risk of harm to the child or young person.

### **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion**

1. The lives and identities of the children and young people accessing services from RHSP will be reflected in the clinical resources used.
2. Upon intake, information is gathered on the preferred communication mode and language for clients and their parents/guardians.
3. Children, young people and their families are encouraged and supported to use multiple modalities and languages to communicate.
4. Children, young people and their families will be involved in personalising AAC vocabulary and settings to ensure that it represents their culture, language, identity and communication style.
5. Translation services and cultural advisors are used when needed to facilitate communication with children, young people and their families in the course of service delivery, complaints management or reporting.
6. Staff are provided access to education, training and supervision to adapt in diverse environments with confidence, and to make informed judgements based on observations and evidence as opposed to stereotypes and biases.

### **Safe environments – physical and online**

1. Staff will ensure the physical environment is safe, secure and free from hazards for children as far as is practicable.
2. Staff will ensure all equipment and materials used meet relevant safety standards.

3. Red Hen Speech Pathology staff are not responsible for assisting in personal care tasks such as toileting, showering or changing the clothes of any child, young person or adult. If a client needs to engage in such activities during a scheduled appointment, support must be sought from a parent/carer.
4. Prior consent is required for video, photo or audio recording, and it will be stored securely and used purely for record keeping and assessment as per the terms of agreement.
5. Photos or video of any client must not be stored on staff personal devices.

### **Managing staff and volunteers**

1. The Director will ensure that all staff within the practice read, understand and implement this policy.
2. The Director will ensure that staff qualifications and identity are verified.
3. The Director will ensure that all staff have a current WWCC and NDIS worker screening and copies of these documents are retained on staff records.
4. The Director will ensure that the website is updated to include information about what current clearances or registrations each staff member has.
5. The Director is responsible for the induction of all staff including training on child-safe policies and practices in the workplace.
6. All speech pathology staff will comply with Speech Pathology Australia's Code of Conduct and Professional Standards for Speech Pathologists.
7. All Red Hen Speech Pathology staff will also comply with policies, procedures and induction processes of relevant external stakeholders (eg. Catholic Education Office, Dept Ed etc).
8. Employees and volunteers are responsible for:
  - a. Ensuring understanding around what a safe environment entails and how to identify harm and risk
  - b. Ensuring worker screening and probity documents are current and maintained
  - c. Ensuring notification to Red Hen Speech Pathology if the status of worker screening or probity requirements change
  - d. Comply with this policy, regulations and legislative guidelines.
9. The Director will ensure that staff have access to any current information, reports or behaviour support plans or reports prior to initial meeting with the client.
10. All staff will ensure that client documentation is maintained in a timely manner, is accurate and objective.

### **Complaint processes and reporting**

1. Parents/guardians of children and young people (<16yo) have a right to read their records and comment on them or seek changes to them when they deem an error has been made unless otherwise stipulated eg. by the terms of a court order or parenting agreement.
2. Children and young people have a right to read their records and to comment on them or seek changes to them.
3. All clients and their families, including children and young people are encouraged to provide feedback regarding services provided by Red Hen Speech Pathology. They have multiple avenues to provide feedback including: direct verbal feedback, email, online feedback form, or annual consumer survey.

4. Alternatively, if families are unhappy with the management of complaints by RHSP or feel unsafe raising their concerns directly with RHSP staff, families may contact Speech Pathology Australia to discuss their concerns [Making a complaint \(speechpathologyaustralia.org.au\)](https://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au).
5. Staff and volunteers will notify the Director immediately if they suspect that a child or young person is at risk of harm, has been harmed, or has been involved in a safety incident.
6. Where there are concerns regarding child safety, strategies will be implemented to address concerns. This may include joint visits; case review; meeting with the child's parents/guardian or other stakeholders; contact with or reporting to the Department of Communities; calling the police or an ambulance; modifications regarding location of service delivery or service delivery model; or other strategies as deemed appropriate given the circumstances following discussion with the Director.
7. The Director is responsible for supporting staff in handling feedback, complaints and disclosures.
8. All Red Hen Speech Pathology staff will follow any procedures recommended by child protection authorities when dealing with any allegations of harm or risk of harm of children.

### Education and Development

1. All staff will complete all 11 e-learning modules on the National Principles of Child Safe Organisations developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission within 1 month of commencing employment.
2. All staff will complete the relevant Child Safety training annually for the Catholic Education Office if they are working with children and young people in Catholic schools.
3. Staff will be supported to undertake training that is responsive to the needs of clients with whom they are working including children and young people who are: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, neurodiverse, gender diverse, religiously diverse and/or have lived experience of disability.
4. Staff will be supported to access training on trauma-informed care.
5. All staff will have regular supervision which will include review of child safety concerns and implementation of child safe practices.
6. Staff will discuss any concerns regarding child safety with the Director in the first instance. Guidance may be sought from a relevant authority including Department of Communities, Department of Education, Catholic Education Office or Speech Pathology Australia.

Department of Communities [Department of Communities \(www.wa.gov.au\)](https://www.wa.gov.au) 1800 176 888

Catholic Education Office [Home - CEWA](#)

Speech Pathology Australia

### Continuous improvement

1. The Director will keep up to date and comply with any changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy and ensure that all staff, volunteers, students, clients and families are informed of any changes.

## Related policies and procedures

RHSP Complaints Policy and Procedures

RHSP Health and Safety Policy and Procedures

RHSP Confidentiality Policy and Procedures

RHSP Social Media Policy and Procedures

## Related legislation, regulations and standards

[Commonwealth Child Safe Framework policy document | National Office for Child Safety](#)

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines [child-safe-organisations-wa-guidelines-updated-november-2019.pdf \(ccyp.wa.gov.au\)](#)

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\) \(unicef.org.au\)](#)

[The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021 2031 | Department of Social Services, Australian Government \(dss.gov.au\)](#)

Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA) [WALW - Children and Community Services Act 2004 - Home Page \(legislation.wa.gov.au\)](#)

Speech Pathology Australia Code of Ethics

National Code of Conduct

## Further Resources

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations – Information and Checklist for staff and volunteers working with children and young people [ccyp-child-safe-organisations-checklist-web.pdf](#)

Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia [Child Safe Organisations WA \(ccyp.wa.gov.au\)](#)

## Approvals

Date of approval: [11/06/2024]

Date of review: [11/6/2025]

Director: Manda Dalton