

CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the minimum safety framework and environments that Playful Connections Speech Pathology (PCSP) 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 as set out in:

- The Children's and Young People (Safety) Act 2017;
- Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016;
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations;
- The SA Office of Guardian for Children and Young People;
- Charter of Rights for Children and Young people in care; and
- The Council of Australian Governments, National Framework for Protecting Australia's children

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees and persons involved with PCSP, including employer, employee, students, children, young people, parents, guardians and families.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1. Children and young people have the right to be safe from harm, grow up free of violence or exploitation, and develop physically, intellectually and socially with dignity.
- 3.2. 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.
- 3.3. PCSP 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.
- 3.4. PCSP child safe practices are built upon risk prevention. The emphasis is on the child, young person or family receiving a service.

4. Policy

- 4.1. Families and those that we are delivering services to must understand how PCSP provides a child safe environment and our obligation to respond appropriately when children have been harmed or are at risk of harm. Families and the general public can access the PCSP Child Safe Environment policy via our website – www.playfulconnectionsspeech.com.au.
- 4.2. Policy and Procedure Standards
 - 4.2.1. PCSP staff have access to PCSP's Child Safe policy and compliance is expected. Any breach is treated with utmost seriousness.
 - 4.2.2. PCSP will assess potential sources of harm in human resource practices, record keeping, physical spaces and client activities and implement strategies to reduce risk.
 - 4.2.3. PCSP staff are made aware of the importance of their own responsibility in upholding this policy and understand that they are mandatory reporters.
- 4.3. Child Safe Environments
 - 4.3.1. 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.

- 4.3.2. PCSP is guided by child safe environments in The National Framework for Creating Child Safe Environments whereby a child safe organisation consciously and systematically:
- Creates an environment where children's safety and wellbeing is the centre of thought, values and actions.
 - Places emphasis on genuine engagement with and valuing of children by using age appropriate and neurodiversity affirming language and inviting feedback from children about their experiences at PCSP (informally through parent/caregiver conversations and feedback forms)
 - Commits to diversity whereby children and young people of different races, ethnicities, gender, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes and religious beliefs are respected, and equity is upheld
 - Creates conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people
 - Creates conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying any harm
 - Responds to any concerns, disclosures, allegations, or suspicions of harm.
 - Creates an environment in which any bullying and/or harassment of children will not be tolerated
- 4.3.3. PCSP has created and maintains an open and aware culture where staff and children are aware of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. Refer to SPA Code of Ethics and PCSP Code of Conduct,
- 4.3.4. PCSP staff will ensure clear observation of child occupied areas through the following means:
- Inclusion of parent/guardian or primary support person (school staff, guardian) at all times unless there is a compelling reason not to do this
 - Where the parent/guardian or primary support person is not present in the room, all doors are kept open and visual and/or at a minimum auditory monitoring must be ensured
 - Where the above conditions are unable to be met for compelling reasons, an agreement must be written up with the parent that ensures appropriate measures are taken and a strategy is in place (for example: real time video monitoring or recording)
- 4.3.5. Prior consent is required for video or photo footage, and it will be stored securely and used purely for record keeping and assessment. See Privacy policy for further details.

4.4. Code of conduct

- 4.4.1. PCSP staff will comply with Playful Connections Speech Pathology Code of Conduct, a copy can be provided to clients and families on request. Refer to 'PCSP Code of Conduct' attachment.
- 4.4.2. PCSP staff will comply with Speech Pathology Australia's Code of Ethics. Families can request a copy of this.
- 4.4.3. PCSP will apply with the Health Community Services and Complaints Commissioner (HCSCC) Code of Conduct for Certain Health Care Workers.
- 4.4.4. PCSP staff will align behaviour with the Speech Pathology Australia Professional Standards <https://speechpathologyaustralia.cld.bz/Speech-Pathology-Australia-Professional-Standards-2020>
- 4.4.5. PCSP staff will also comply with policies and procedures of relevant external stakeholders (Catholic Education, DECD, Lutheran schools etc)
- 4.4.6. PCSP will follow any procedures recommended by child protection authorities, when dealing with any allegations of harm or risk of harm of children.

4.5. Worker Screening and Recruitment

- 4.5.1. PCSP will ensure that any future recruitment decisions are based on merit and the successful candidate is appointed with consideration to the skills and qualification required for the role.
- 4.5.2. PCSP will conduct face-to-face interviews that include behavioural questions in relation to child safeguarding where possible and complete at least two reference checks.
- 4.5.3. PCSP will ensure that all workers understand their responsibilities by providing position descriptions with a clear commitment to child safety and wellbeing and relevant information relating to guidelines from Speech Pathology Australia.
- 4.5.4. PCSP has the responsibility to ensure appropriate workers screening is completed during recruitment, is maintained during employment and compliant with the requirements of the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016.
- 4.5.5. All staff and volunteers (over the age of 14 years) working with children and young people must hold a valid 'not prohibited' Working with Children Check issued by the Screening Unit of the Department of Human Services. Verification will be done online through the Organisation Portal accessed via the DHS Screening Unit. WWCC for all employees must be renewed every 5 years and this will be verified through the DHS Screening Unit
 - Department of Human Services Screening Unit will be contacted immediately when PCSP becomes aware of certain information regarding any person involved with the organisation, including any serious criminal offence, child protection information, or disciplinary or misconduct information.
- 4.5.6. PCSP requires the following current documentation for staff –
 - Speech Pathology Australia Membership, and as such staff will abide by the Speech Pathology Australia Code of Ethics.
 - Australian Drivers Licence
 - Working With Children Check (every 5 years)
 - Reporting Abuse and Neglect (RAN - EC) training (every 3 years)
 - Child Safe Training (every 3 years)
 - Insurance – Professional indemnity Insurance and public liability insurance (yearly)
- 4.5.7. PCSP will manage on-boarding of new employees through an Orientation Checklist
- 4.5.8. PCSP will manage the ongoing employment relationship ensuring long-term fit through coaching, support, and performance reviews.
- 4.5.9. Should any of the above registrations, memberships, or insurances lapse, it may inhibit staff from performing the inherent requirements of the role and employment may be terminated.
- 4.5.10. PCSP will work with staff to develop procedures to ensure appropriate workers screening is maintained.
- 4.5.11. PCSP must notify the relevant government agency if during recruitment it is identified that a person has applied for a child related role who is deemed a prohibited person.
- 4.5.12. PCSP must only employ a person who is not a prohibited person and has provided a copy of the current relevant clearances.
- 4.5.13. A person must not apply for or remain in child-related employment if deemed a prohibited person and any staff member that becomes a prohibited person must inform the Director immediately.

4.6. Training and Support

- 4.6.1. PCSP staff need to learn about the nature of child harm and risk of harm and develop an awareness of how and why some children are harmed.
- 4.6.2. PCSP support staff to understand our child safe policies, mandatory reporting obligations, and their responsibilities to help create a child safe/friendly environment.
- 4.6.3. Support:
 - Performance appraisals provide opportunity to discuss areas of concerns and evaluation
 - Employee induction includes staff receiving copy of Child Safe Environment policy
 - Supervision is provided to all employees through a variety of means including but not limited to; phone calls, work shadowing and face to face meetings
- 4.6.4. Training:
 - It is compulsory for PCSP staff to undertake suitable child safe environment training. Reporting Risk of Harm, Abuse and Neglect (RRHAN - EC) and Child 'Safe Environments: Through their eyes' training must occur periodically on a regular basis i.e. every 3 years.
 - Ensure staff read and have access to the Mandatory Notification Information Booklet - https://dhs.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/103179/CSE-Mandatory-notification-information-booklet.PDF (also included in employee checklist as part of employee induction)
 - Professional development opportunities are encouraged to build knowledge and skills regarding the wellbeing and development of children and young people.

4.7. Mandatory Notification

- 4.7.1. PCSP supports mandatory reporting to appropriate statutory bodies.
- 4.7.2. PCSP employees are classified as mandated reporters under *the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*. Employees can refer to the Mandatory Notification Information Booklet for further information.
- 4.7.3. PCSP will act thoroughly and quickly, with top importance placed on ensuring the safety and protection of children and young people.
- 4.7.4. PCSP staff are legally obligated to notify the Department of Child Protection via the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 as soon as practicable if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, harmed. If a child or young person is in immediate danger call SA Police on 000.
- 4.7.5. PCSP staff or volunteers are encouraged to notify Director after they have made a report to CARL/SAPOL regarding a child or young person receiving a service from the organisation
- 4.7.6. In the event that a mandated report relates to a PCSP employee, that employee will be immediately removed from all contact with children and young people at PCSP until appropriate investigations have been completed. All other clients of PCSP who may have had contact with employee will be contacted and provided with information about where and how to raise any further concerns (e.g., CARL, conversation with Director etc).

4.7.5. Reporting concerns:

1. PCSP staff will document any concern or incidents in the client file.
2. The PCSP staff member, using their knowledge from 'Reporting Risk of Harm, Abuse and Neglect' training will make a report to the Child Abuse Report Line as deemed necessary. They will complete the following template to support them with the process: Playful Connections mandatory-notification-record- template
3. Upon reporting, the Child Abuse Report Line team can provide information to the staff member about if, when & what to inform the family about.
4. PCSP will follow advice from CARL to support the employee and/or child or young person. This could include:
 - Referral to appropriate support services e.g. Kids helpline on 1800 55 1800 or youth helpline on 1300 13 17 19
 - Continuing to provide a service to the child or young person and their family and monitoring their circumstances
5. PCSP staff members have a right to take any action to ensure that children and staff are safe at all times. This may involve contacting the police if any person or family makes threats against staff.
6. Any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm may report their concerns to the Child Abuse Report Line. This means any person, including non-mandated licensed children's services are able to make a report when they believe that a child or young person is at risk of harm and in need of protection.

5. Breach of Policy or Code of Conduct

- 5.1. If families believe there has been breach of the policy or code of conduct, direct complaints are welcomed and PCSP will work to resolve the issue.
- 5.2. The Director can be contacted via phone (m.0457 613 421); email (belinda@playfulconnectionsspeech.com.au); or through the PCSP website (<https://www.playfulconnectionsspeech.com.au>).
- 5.3. Alternatively, a complaint can be made to the South Australian Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (HCSCC) <https://www.hcsc.sa.gov.au/about/hcsc-services/>
- 5.4. Process
 - 5.4.1. Where a breach of policy or Code of Conduct has been identified, PCSP will review the information provided regarding the alleged breach. If clarification is required, this will be sought by engaging with the person who initially identified the breach.
 - 5.4.2. If a breach relates to harm, or risk of harm, to a child or young person the mandatory notification process above must be followed
 - 5.4.3. PCSP will meet with the employee to discuss the alleged breach and they will have an opportunity to respond to the allegation.
 - 5.4.4. PCSP will investigate the alleged breach, which may include interviewing other parties identified within the breach. If the breach relates to harm or risk of harm to a child or young person, investigation will be referred to DCP or SAPOL for appropriate investigation.
 - 5.4.5. At all times PCSP will remain impartial; review the facts; be fair, just, and reasonable; and keep all parties informed of the progress of the investigation while maintaining confidentiality.

- 5.4.6. If deemed necessary PCSP will access performance management, which may include coaching, counselling issuing a written warning, or in serious cases, termination of employment.

6. Feedback and Complaint Handling

- 6.1. PCSP are committed to dealing with complaints and feedback promptly, sensitively, and fairly. Complaints can be made in person, in writing or via phone to PCSP Director
- 6.2. All feedback and complaints will be dealt with in line with the PCSP Complaints Policy. Policy is available on PCSP website and provided to families at initial consult as part of welcome pack.

7. Risk Management

PCSP risk management plan identifies risks to children and young people and the strategies in place to minimise and manage those risks to help maintain a child safe environment. Refer to Risk Management Plan (Supporting Document).

- 7.1 Identified possible risks to children and young people at PCSP, not already included in this document, include:
- Children/young people are physically touched by staff to assist in activity participation, skill development (e.g., hand over hand support), physical cues to gain attention considering communication challenges
 - Taking images of children and young people for the purpose of parent training and capacity building
 - Physical environment – outdoor clinic environment
- 7.2 Responses to lessen these risks are as follows:
- 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
 - When taking images of children and young people, PCSP employee must have consent of child young person and parent/guardian.
 - Children and young people are to be supervised by parents/guardians at all times – outdoor risks are discussed with families at each session

8. Supporting Documents

This policy must be read in conjunction with the following documents, policies and/or procedures –

Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017

Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016

The National Framework for Creating Child Safe Environments

Playful Connections mandatory-notification-record-template

Playful Connections Complaints Policy

Playful Connections Code of Conduct

Playful Connections Risk Management Policy and Procedures

Speech Pathology Australia Code of Ethics

Mandatory Notification Information Booklet

Professional Standards for Speech Pathologist in Australia

Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner Code of Conduct for Certain Health Care Workers

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

9. Persons Responsible

9.1. Employees are responsible for:

- Ensuring understanding around what a safe environment entails and how to identify harm and risk
- Ensuring worker screening and probity documents are current and maintained
- Ensuring notification to PCSP if the status of worker screening or probity requirements change
- Comply with this policy, regulations, and legislative guidelines

9.2. The Director is responsible for:

- Ensuring employees understand their responsibilities and rights under this policy
- Ensuring worker screening and probity documents are current and maintained
- Reviewing and updating this policy in line with legislative and best practice updates, which under the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 is five years.
- Supporting employees in handling feedback and complaints
- Managing queries and complaints in line with this policy

10. Definitions

CARL – Means the Child Abuse Report Line, ph. 131478, or online electronic notification through E-CARL at <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/>

Child or young person - persons under 18 years of age.

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.

Working with Children Check - People working or volunteering with children in South Australia must, by law, have a valid, not prohibited Working with Children Check. A Working with Children Check is an assessment of whether a person poses an unacceptable risk to children. As part of the process, the Screening Unit will look at criminal history, child protection information and other information.

Client – any person for which PCSP provides a service

Mandated reporter – A person who comes within one of the categories set out in Section 30 (3) of the Child and Young Person (Safety) Act 2017, and so has an obligation to report a suspicion of a type described in Section 31 of the Act

Staff – refers to employees and volunteers of PCSP. Is used interchangeably with Employee and Workers.

Reasonable suspicion – A suspicion is a state of mind. It is different from knowledge or belief. It requires more than a guess but does not need to be sufficient to form a belief as to the existence of an event or circumstance. There does not need to be proof that a child or young person is, or may be, at risk. However, there needs to be a factual basis for the suspicion. The suspicion must be 'reasonable'. Whether a suspicion is reasonable will depend on various factors, including the surrounding circumstances and the plausibility of the information available to the mandatory reporter. A mandatory reporter should consider the following:

- Was the information obtained in the course of his or her employment (noting that employment is broadly defined in the Act)?
- On the information available, does the reporter have a suspicion that something might happen or might have happened?
- If the reporter has a suspicion that something might happen or might have happened, is it reasonable to rely upon the information which causes him or her to have the suspicion?

The mandated reporter must form the reasonable suspicion alone. The suspicion does not need to be accepted and discussed with staff members, managers, or parents/carers. Whilst the mandatory reporter might like to talk through the circumstances with another person, ultimately it is the mandatory reporter who needs to be satisfied that they hold a suspicion.

11. Variation and Review

- 11.1. PCSP will review this policy every five (5) years, if new legislation is introduced, if legislation is changed or as a result of feedback, complaints, or risk management; whichever comes first.
- 11.2. PCSP will lodge a new child safe environments compliance statement with Department of Human Services each time the policy is reviewed and updated.
- 11.3. Latest Review date: October 2022
- 11.4. Next review date: October 2027