

Date Written: 10/7/2020

Reviewed: 9/10/2020

Child Safe Policy

Definition: Child safety refers to actions taken to protect children and young people (under 18 years) from harm and abuse. Victorian organisations that provide services for children are required by law to implement Child Safe Standards to protect children from harm.

Mission Statement: The mission of *Specialist Behaviour Support Services (SBSS)* is to support society's most vulnerable individuals to live in a way which promotes optimal levels of independence, freedom from unnecessary restrictions and as a meaningful part of their local and wider community.

Context: On 19 February 2019 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), which included the Victorian Government, endorsed the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) (National Principles). The National Principles embed the child safe standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission).

The Commission for Children and Young People provides further details on the standards.

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/being-a-child-safe-organisation/the-child-safe-standards/>

There are seven child safe standards:

- [Standard 1: Governance and leadership](#)
- [Standard 2: Clear commitment to child safety](#)
- [Standard 3: Code of conduct](#)
- [Standard 4: Human resource practices](#)
- [Standard 5: Responding and reporting](#)
- [Standard 6: Risk management and mitigation](#)
- [Standard 7: Empowering children.](#)

Details on the National Child Safe Organizations Standards can be found here:

<https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/National Principles for Child Safe Organisations2019.pdf>

Our Commitment

SBSS is committed to ensuring the rights of every person we have contact with, within the provision of our services are protected. We take extra care and duty with ensuring the safety and wellbeing of every child and young person is maintained and a top priority; recognising that the safety of children is everyone's responsibility. We respect, embrace and support the diversity in all participants, and particularly children and young people.

Specialist Behaviour Support Services.

Version 1: Director Approval

Schedule of Review: Bi-annually

SBSS will:

- listen to the views of children or young people and respect what they say and involve them when we make decisions, especially about matters that will directly affect them
- respect children and young people's rights, background, culture and beliefs as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- comply with all relevant commonwealth, state or territory laws protecting children and young people
- follow mandatory reporting requirements for children or young people suspected to be at risk of significant harm
- safeguard children or young people at all times and not place them at risk of abuse, or condone behaviour which is unsafe
- use appropriate language for the age and understanding of the child or young person, and avoid confusing or age-inappropriate discussions with sexual, discriminatory or violent references
- avoid any actions or words intended to threaten, intimidate, shame, humiliate, belittle, embarrass or degrade children or young people

Policy Procedures

Child Safe Recruitment Practices

Duty of Care Statement

Each person's role within SBSS is outlined within their corresponding position description; a number of responsibilities and expectations are clearly stated to ensure that employees, contractors and volunteers are held accountable for their actions and interactions with all participants including children and young people.

Screening

All employees, contractors and or volunteers will be screened for their suitability to work with children using a Working with Children Check, police checks, referee checks and identity checks

Communication of Child Safe Policy and Standards to SBSS Employees

SBSS expects practitioners behave appropriately with every child and explicitly ensures the child feels safe and is free from psychological, emotional or physical harm of any kind.

SBSS ensures that every practitioner is trained in recognising signs and risks of child welfare, and their *duty of care* and reporting requirements. This is policy is reviewed as a core module

in practitioners induction training into SBSS and requires the signature from practitioners authorising their understanding and agreement to adhere to the lawful requirements and SBSS's commitment to protect children outlined in this policy.

Communication of Child Safe Policy to Participants and Families/ Organisations

SBSS has zero tolerance for child abuse or inappropriate behaviour of any SBSS employee towards a child. To achieve this, SBSS will communicate the child safe practices that overarch service provision at the commencement of services with families and participants under the age of 18 years. This information is found in the Participant Information Booklet provided at the commencement of service.

Implementation of Child Safe Policy in Practice

Safe Relationships

- SBSS maintain professional and courteous relationships with children and their families to provide services in a way that does not exploit or abuse our position
- will actively work to listen to and empower children through genuine engagement with the child or young person and applying a person centred / strengths-based approach within assessment and intervention. This is further discussed in the *Commitment to Active Participation and Decision-Making Policy*
- has respect for the best interests of the child as a primary consideration throughout our service provision
- encourage children to report if they feel unsafe or concerned at any time, within any environment.
- Strategies to promote Children's active participation is further found here:
<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/tipsheet-empower-participation-children.pdf>

Protecting the most vulnerable

The Child Safe Standards are underpinned by the understanding that all children are vulnerable. However, three overarching principles require organisations to consider the increased vulnerability of:

- Aboriginal children
- those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children with disabilities.

These groups of children and young people may be particularly vulnerable to being victimised and may face challenges in reporting an incident of abuse.

SBSS is committed to promoting cultural safety of Aboriginal children, cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

- This is achieved through using appropriate communication tools and behaviours that promote the child's understanding and active participation throughout the duration of service.

Identification of Risk or Actual Harm

- SBSS is committed to identify and reduce risks of harm or abuse towards a child or young person. This is achieved through effective risk assessment and mitigation strategies. Risks that are beyond our organisational control will be reported to the appropriate authorities as soon as they are identified.
- Some questions that are continually reviewed and screened for as part of this

Risk Assessment process include:

1. What could go wrong within a specific activity SBSS provides?
2. Are there any circumstances that expose children to risk?
3. Is there a potential for bodily contact between adults and children during any activity?
4. Is there a low level of parental involvement in the service delivery?
5. Are there places where interactions between adults and children can be obscured from sight?
6. Are there circumstances where a staff member or volunteer could be left alone with a child?
7. What additional measures need to be put in place for our particularly vulnerable children, including those children with a disability, children in out of home care, children from culturally and linguistic diverse backgrounds and aboriginal children?

Action Plans to mitigate against the risks identified for the child or young person will be completed in each case required, between the practitioner and supervisor.

-
- SBSS will take all allegations very seriously and will respond to them consistently in line with our ethical and legal responsibilities and duty of care. All incidents will be

reported in line with our organisational incident reporting system and our state and national obligations.

- SBSS will keep safe and secure accurate records outlined in our incidental reporting policy and complaints management procedures.

Definition of Breach of Child Safe Policy

- failure to disclose—all adults in Australia with a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child have an obligation to report that information to the police
- failure to protect—SBSS will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so. All reportable incidents will be completed and submitted to the appropriate authorities for a staff member's failure to protect a child at risk of abuse.

*Any breach of the child safe policy will result in immediate cessation of services provided by the person until the outcome of a thorough investigation of the incident is completed. A failure to protect a child at risk of abuse will result in immediate termination of their employment with SBSS.

By signing below, you acknowledge the importance of keeping children safe and agree to comply with the state and national child safe standards and SBSS policy.

Staff Signature _____

Date_____