

## Working with Children Policy and Procedure - Tasmania

### Purpose

TassieCare services recognises the participant's right to feel safe and to live in an environment that protects from assault, neglect, exploitation, or any other form of abuse. This policy specifically looks at the requirements when working with participants under eighteen (18) years.

TassieCare has zero-tolerance towards abuse and neglect of children and young people. We are committed to the rights of all children and young people to feel safe and be safe when participating in our organization's activities, services, and programs. The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities, procedures and practices required by all personnel within TassieCare in relation to keeping children and young people free from abuse and neglect.

This policy supports our international obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and is aligned with the Australian Human Rights Commission National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

As such, our policies and procedures reflect child safe legislation and promote best practice and care for the children and young people within our organization. Our Senior Management Team approves and endorses our TassieCare Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

We take seriously our responsibility to deliver a supportive environment that is caring, nurturing and safe. We are committed to taking action in advancing the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and ensuring compliance with all requirements set out in this policy.

### Scope

This policy applies to all team members and stakeholders connected with our organisation. This policy applies in all our operational environments and without fail wherever children and young people are participating in our organisation's activities, programs, services and/or facilities.

### Policy

TassieCare services will encourage and support any person who has witnessed the abuse of a participant or who suspects that abuse has occurred to make a report and be confident of doing so without fear of retribution.

TassieCare services acknowledges that prevention is the best protection from abuse and neglect and recognises their duty of care obligations to implement prevention strategies. As a mandatory reporting body, our organisation is required to report any indicators.

Team Members engaged in a risk-assessed role must have the required Tasmanian clearance checks.

Team Members must undergo the NDIS worker screening process before employment, and results are recorded in their personnel file.

Team Members should guide children who require assistance to **Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800** for support, as required.

### Our Commitment

TassieCare is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who access our activities, programs, services and/or facilities. Our policies and procedures seek to address risks to child safety and to establish a safeguarding culture and practices.

Our safeguarding policies and procedures are:

- publicly accessible, online and in forms that are easy to understand.
- informed by stakeholder consultation; and
- communicated to children, young people and their families, our personnel, our partners and contractors and the general public.

To inform and review our safeguarding policies, we seek feedback from all our services users and providers. We gain endorsement and advise stakeholders of any changes.

### **We are committed to safeguarding children and young people.**

Through our *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy* we document our clear commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. We communicate our commitment to all of our personnel and ensure that our *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy* is available in child-friendly versions that reflects the ages, developmental stage, diversity and abilities of the children and young people whom we deliver services.

We have a zero-tolerance approach towards child abuse and neglect and take seriously any raised concerns / incidents.

Our approach to risk management recognises the potential risks to children and young people associated with our organisation's service delivery and considers online and physical or psychological environments, and any vulnerable or diverse circumstances of children or young people utilising our services.

### **Our personnel know the behaviour we expect.**

We ensure that each person involved in the delivery of our services understands their role and the behaviour we expect in relation to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. We utilise position descriptions which clearly state relevant responsibilities and safeguarding requirements.

Our organisation requires all personnel to acknowledge, in writing, their commitment and adherence to our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

We have a Code of Conduct, which is approved and endorsed from the highest levels of our organisation that outlines our expectations for behaviour towards children and young people.

We monitor and supervise all personnel, including contractors and partner organisations, for appropriate practice and behaviour in the delivery of our service to children and young people.

### **Our personnel understand their responsibility for reporting child abuse.**

Our policy for reporting and responding to child abuse is approved and endorsed from the highest levels of our organisation and applies to all our personnel.

The policy states that:

- personnel must immediately report abuse or neglect and any concerns with policies, practices, or the behaviour of personnel.
- personnel must meet any legislated mandatory reporting requirements.
- personnel must follow a specified process when reporting abuse or neglect including who will receive reports.
- failure to report is serious misconduct.

Our personnel are given a copy of and have access to the policy and understand the implications of the policy for their role. We document any allegation, disclosure or concern regarding child abuse and monitor responses to all allegations, disclosures, or concerns.

## Procedure

### When to report an abusive situation

It is important to always search for the cause of a change in a participant's behaviour or unexplained physical symptoms. If a participant shows one or more of the possible signs of abuse, it must be reported immediately, even though this does not automatically mean abuse has taken place. Possible signs of abuse are when:

- a participant shows a change in behaviour or mood that may indicate they are being abused
- someone is seen behaving inappropriately towards a participant
- a participant tells staff another person has abused them
- a person tells staff that they are abusing a participant
- participant or visitor advises a Team Member that they have observed abusive acts
- someone observes an action or inaction towards a participant that may be considered abusive
- a person suspects or has reason to believe a participant is being abused.

The Case Manager will then report to child safety services. Failure to report an abusive situation may result in a criminal offence.

### How to report

The Case Manager will use their professional understanding and knowledge of child protection to determine when to contact the required reporting body. The Director or

their delegate will contact the Department of Health and Human Services **Strong Families-Safe Kids Advice and Referral line on 1800 000 123.**

If a child is at immediate risk and police or medical assistance is required, the Director will call Emergency Services on 000.

Where a child or young person needs immediate protection, the Case Manager will call the **Advice and Referral Line** on 1800 000 123 (General business hours are 8:30 am - 5:00 pm Monday to Friday). After-hours on-call services are available.

An [online contact form](#) is also located on the Department of Health and Human Services website. Go to [www.dhhs.tas.gov.au](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au).

### Details to provide

The Case Manager will provide the following information to the child abuse report line:

- child's name, age, date of birth and address
- description of injury, abuse, or neglect (outline current and previous)
- child's current situation
- location of the child, parent or caregiver and alleged perpetrator
- when and how they found out about the abuse.

### Child identification details and context

TassieCare services will need to provide enough detail to identify the child or young person and give context to the report, including:

- child's full name
- date of birth or age
- current address
- contact number
- school/kindergarten/childcare centre
- ethnicity, i.e. cultural background, aboriginal kinship group, non-English speaking
- who are the parents; do they all live in the same house? Are there siblings in the house?
- alleged perpetrator's name, age, address, relationships to the child and current whereabouts
- current whereabouts of the child of concern
- details of when the next expected contact with the alleged perpetrator will occur
- family court orders, apprehended violence orders or domestic violence orders, if in place.

### Defining child maltreatment, abuse, and neglect

Child abuse and neglect are related to any behaviour by parents, caregivers, other adults, or older adolescents outside the norms of conduct and entail a substantial risk of causing physical or emotional harm to a child or a young person. Such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (i.e. neglect) and commission (i.e. abuse).

### Physical abuse

- Signs and symptoms: Bruising, lacerations, welts, rashes, broken or healing bones, burns, weight loss, facial swelling, missing teeth, pain, or restricted movements, crying, acting fearful, agitation, drowsiness, hair loss or poor physical wellbeing.
- Causes: Hitting, slapping, pushing, punching, or burning, which involves an incident that is non-accidental, resulting in pain or injury.

### Psychological and emotional abuse

- Signs and symptoms: Loss of interest in self-care, helplessness, withdrawn, apathy, insomnia, fearfulness, reluctance to communicate openly, choosing not to maintain eye contact, paranoia, and confusion.
- Causes: Intimidation, humiliation, harassment, threatening behaviour, sleep deprivation, withholding affection, not allowing a person to maintain their decision-making powers which lead to a pattern when repeated over time.

### Financial abuse

- Signs and symptoms: Unpaid accounts, withholding funds, loss of jewellery and personal belongings, removal of cash from wallet/purse, a person becomes agitated when discussing money, not providing money for outings and personal items, or a person takes over the care of someone's money without their permission.
- Causes: Misuse of a person's money, valuables, or property, forced changes to legal documents (such as a will), denying access to or control of personal funds, stealing, fraud, forgery, embezzlement, misuse of power of attorney, removing decision-making powers of a person.

### Sexual abuse

- Signs and symptoms: Unexplained sexual transmitted disease, vaginal/anal bleeding, fear of specific people or places, bruising to genital areas, inner thigh or around breasts, anxiety, torn or bloody underclothes, difficulty in walking or sitting, change in sleep patterns, repeating nightmares.
- Causes: Rape (penetration or oral-genital contact), interest in older person's bodies, inappropriate comments, and sexual references, inappropriate (possibly painful) administration of enemas or genital cleansing, indecent assault, sexual harassment, which is mainly about violence and power over another person rather than sexual pleasure.

### Neglect

- Signs and symptoms: Poor hygiene or personal care, unkempt appearance, lack of personal items, absence of health aids, weight loss, agitation, inappropriate clothing, lack of food.
- Cause: Intentional failure to provide basic life necessities.

### Social abuse

- Signs and symptoms: Sadness and grief due to people not visiting, anxiety after a particular person's visit, withdrawal, low self-esteem, appearing ashamed, passivity, listlessness.
- Causes: Prevention of contact with friends or family, preventing access to social activities.

### Related documents

- Code of Conduct Acknowledgement
- Easy Read Service Agreement
- Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy
- Incident Investigation Form
- Incident Investigation Form Final Report
- Incident Report Workzone
- Incident Register
- Participant Notes
- Risk Assessment Form
- Risk Management Plan
- Risk Register
- Reportable Incident, Accident and Emergency Policy and Procedure
- Violence, Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Discrimination Policy and Procedure
- Zero Tolerance Policy and Procedure

### References

- Children, Young Persons, and their Family Act 1997 (TAS)
- Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013 (TAS)
- Personal Information Protection Act 2004 (TAS)
- The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989
- NDIS (Practice Standards - Worker Screening) Rules 2018
- NDIS (Quality and Safeguards) Commission 2018

### Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibilities of each role in relation to the development and compliance of the *TassieCare Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy* is detailed below.

Role	Responsibility
Senior Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children, and young people in support of this Policy and its expectations.</li> <li>• Promote the commitment to this Policy and its expectations both internally and publicly.</li> <li>• Support policy review on a 3-year cycle as a minimum or at a time governed by legislation, regulations, or organisational learnings that promote a change to the Policy and all relevant policy or procedural guidelines.</li> </ul>

Role	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure compliance to the Policy via an inbuilt mechanism for ongoing monitoring and review.</li> <li>• Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow for the development, effective implementation, communication, and continuous improvement of this policy.</li> <li>• Develop opportunities for regular discussion and review at all levels to support a culture of openness and continued improvement and accountability to keeping children and young people safe from abuse and neglect.</li> </ul>
<b>All Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this Policy.</li> <li>• Ensure all Personnel understand their obligations in accordance with this Policy and any relevant policy and procedural documentation.</li> <li>• Ensure this Policy is implemented and adhered to amongst personnel.</li> <li>• Ensure the development and implementation of required internal policy/ procedures and guidelines are in place to support safeguarding children and young people practices in accordance with the expectations of this Policy.</li> <li>• Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation of this Policy.</li> <li>• Ensure to fully support Personnel with any decision to initiate action to protect a child from abuse and neglect.</li> <li>• Ensure appropriate supports, such as counselling and formal debriefing, are provided for any Personnel involved in a matter relating to responding to a concern for the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person.</li> <li>• Proactively share resources and experience in the development of child safe initiatives as they are identified.</li> <li>• Develop opportunities for regular discussion and review at all levels to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability of keeping children and young people safe from abuse and neglect.</li> <li>• Ensure that all personnel are aware of the appropriate recruitment, screening, and employment practice in relation to safeguarding children and young people.</li> </ul>
<b>HR &amp; Management Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and update this Policy and supporting resources in consultation with relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>• Support the coordination of the Safeguarding Children and Young People framework and its implementation.</li> <li>• Evaluate and analyse complaints, concerns and safety incidents relating to this Policy.</li> <li>• Provide training and advice in the application of this Policy</li> </ul>
<b>Employees/ Volunteers/ Contractors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children, and young people in support of this Policy.</li> <li>• Maintain a full understanding of the commitments and expectations of this Policy, as well as all other policy relevant to safeguarding children and young people.</li> <li>• Ensure compliance with this Policy, fully implementing and adhering to the commitments and expectations.</li> </ul>

Role	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To undertake any induction and training anticipated in this Policy, in relation to policy and procedures relevant to safeguarding children and young people.</li> <li>• To support a culture of openness, continued improvement and accountability to children and young people by engaging in regular review and discussion of organisational policies and practices and providing feedback to support improvement.</li> <li>• To seek guidance from a supervisor or manager if there is ever any lack of understanding in relation to the commitments and expectations as set out in this Policy.</li> <li>• To adopt appropriate safeguarding practice and behaviour</li> <li>• To take action to protect children and young people from all forms of abuse and neglect.</li> <li>• To report any abuse committed by personnel within our organisation or by others.</li> <li>• To assist in creating and maintaining a child safe culture and a culture of inclusion and safety.</li> </ul>

Endorsed by:



Joshua Aird  
**Director**



Gautam Chadda  
**Director**

on behalf of **TassieCare**

Date: **18/08/2023**

Review date:

**For clarification regarding this policy, please contact:**

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**Written & Authorised by:** Jonathan Bishton People & Culture Manager

**Date:** 22/02/2023.