

AUTISM ABILITIES CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

Autism Abilities acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we live, work and travel and pays respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders past, present and future. We are committed to the cultural safety of all children including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability. Everyone is welcome at Autism Abilities regardless of their background, race, culture, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation.

Autism Abilities is committed to being an organisation that is safe for all children, where child abuse and harm are not tolerated. Child safety is a priority for Autism Abilities and the prevention and reporting of abuse is supported and encouraged. All staff are responsible for promoting the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of children. Autism Abilities recognises that discrimination can harm children and we treat all children with dignity and respect.

This Code of Conduct sets expectations for how all staff should behave around children. It identifies positive, child safe behaviours that all staff are required to demonstrate. It also identifies behaviours that are considered unacceptable and not permitted at Autism Abilities.

Not following standards of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is a breach of this Code of Conduct and may result in disciplinary action. Some behaviours on their own may not be a serious breach of the Code of Conduct but together may indicate a concerning pattern of behaviour that poses a risk to the safety of children.

For clarification, all staff must always follow these standards of behaviour at all times.

I WILL:

- take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.
- take disclosures of harm or abuse made by a child seriously.
- raise concerns with management if risks to child safety are identified.
- report and act on any concerns or observed breaches of this Code of Conduct.
- participate in all compulsory training and professional development including training on child safety and wellbeing.
- treat all children and young people with respect, regardless of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, cultural background, financial situation, disability or other characteristics.
- consider the different needs of all children and support them to participate in Autism Abilities services and help them and their families feel included.

- make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families feel included and welcome at Autism Abilities and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights.
- never be racist towards anyone at Autism Abilities and report any instances of racism I become aware of.
- help Autism Abilities be a place where people of all cultures feel safe and included.
- listen to children and respond to them if they feel unsafe.
- value children and young people's ideas and opinions.
- involve children and young people in decisions about the activities they participate in at Autism Abilities and welcome the participation of parents and carers in these decisions.
- report any conflicts of interest I have (such as an outside relationship with a child) that may affect my ability to perform my role.
- respect the privacy of children and their families, including keeping all personal information confidential unless required by law to share it.
- ensure breaches of this Code are reported to a member of Autism Abilities Leadership team immediately.
- comply with all relevant Australian and Victorian legislation and Autism Abilities child safe policies and procedures.
- uphold the rights of the child and always prioritise their needs.

I WILL NOT:

- condone or participate in illegal, unsafe, abusive or harmful behaviour towards children – this includes physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, grooming, neglect or sexual misconduct.
- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm.
- exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
- use hurtful or offensive behaviour or language with children.
- fail to report information to police if I know a child has been abused.
- touch children in a way that is unnecessary or unsuitable and falls outside what is reasonable to engage in service delivery.
- persistently criticise and/or denigrate a child.
- deliberately prevent a child from forming friendships.
- verbally assault a child or create a climate of fear.
- offer children and young people alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs.
- show children pornographic images.
- share details of sexual experiences with a child.
- use sexual language or gestures in the presence of children.
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves such as changing clothes.

- develop 'special' relationships with specific children or show favouritism through the provision of gifts or unnecessary or unsuitable attention.
- have unauthorised contact with children and young people online, on social media or by phone.
- take photographs, screenshots or share images of children involved in activities that are not authorised by Autism Abilities.
- be alone with a child when there is no professional reason for doing so.
- engage in babysitting, mentoring and/or tutoring of a child out of work hours (or any other similar activity or kind of secondary activity or employment)

If I suspect that this Code of Conduct has been breached by another person in the organisation

I WILL:

- promptly take actions to ensure the child or children are safe.
- immediately report the incident, concern, near miss or disclosure in accordance with Autism Abilities Incident Management Policy.

Complaints about a breach of this Code of Conduct must be reported to the CEO or a member of the Leadership team.

Some breaches of this Code of Conduct may need to be reported to the Victorian Police, or to the Commission for Children and Young People.

Staff who breach this Code of Conduct may also be subject to disciplinary action. This can include increased supervision, appointment to an alternative role, suspension or termination from the organisation.

Important note:

If a person in a position of authority within Autism Abilities becomes aware of a substantial risk that a child may become the victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the organisation (for example, an employee, contractor or volunteer), and they have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, then they must take all reasonable steps to do so. **A person in authority who negligently fails to take appropriate action to address the risk may be charged with the criminal offence of 'failing to protect' and may face a term of imprisonment.**

If an adult reasonably believes a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16, they must report it to Victoria Police by calling 000 or going to their local police station. Failure to disclose the information may be a criminal offence.

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