



Child Safe Environment Policy

Commitment to the Safety of Children and Young People

We are committed to providing a safe environment to all children and young people. Our policy complies with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 and aligns with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

We value and respect children and young people and welcome them regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, or social economic or cultural background. Bullying and harassment won't be tolerated.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, work placement students, contractors and board/committee members referred to throughout the policy collectively as workers.

All workers are required to agree in writing to accept and act in accordance with the policy.

Definitions

Children and Young People: Individuals under the age of 18 years, as defined by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 s16(1).

Harm: physical or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission), including harm caused by sexual, physical, mental, or emotional abuse or neglect (as defined by Section 17 of the Safety Act).

Discrimination: The unfair or prejudicial treatment of an individual or group based on characteristics such as disability, race, gender, age, religion, or other protected attributes.

Risk: The likelihood of harm or negative outcomes occurring due to identified vulnerabilities or unsafe conditions.

Communication

This child safe policy and related documents are available to children, young people and their families on our website, on request and on our management software to workers.

This child safe policy and related documents are provided to all workers as part of their induction following recruitment.

We encourage and respect the views of children and young people and involve them in decision making as appropriate. We provide clear age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate explanations to children and young people including their



right to safety, their right to be listened to and that they can provide feedback or make a complaint if they have a concern, to any worker or ask their parent/guardian to do this on their behalf. We will listen to and act upon complaints or concerns that a child or young person raises with us.

Code of Conduct

Caring for children and young people brings additional responsibilities for all workers. We are responsible for promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Workers must:

- abide by the organisation's child safe policy at all times and take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people
- treat everyone including those of different race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes and religious beliefs with respect and honesty and ensure equity is upheld
- be a positive role model to children and young people in all conduct with them
- set clear boundaries and maintain appropriate behaviours with children and young people – boundaries help everyone to understand their roles
- listen and respond appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people
- be alert to bullying behaviours and respond promptly and appropriately
- ensure another adult is always present or in sight when conducting one to one consulting, coaching, instruction or other activity
- be alert to children and young people who have been harmed, or may be at risk of harm and reporting this quickly to the Child Abuse Report Line (13 14 78)
- respond quickly, fairly and transparently to any complaints made by a child, young person or their parent/guardian
- encourage children and young people to 'have a say' on issues that are important to them.

Workers must not:

- engage in rough physical games
- develop any 'special' relationships with children and young people that could be seen as favouritism such as the offering of gifts or special treatment
- do things of a personal nature that a child or young person can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes



- discriminate against any child or young person because of age, gender, cultural background, religion, vulnerability or sexuality.

Breaches or suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct should be reported as soon as practicable to management either in person, by telephone on 0429 323 221 or via email at hr@ahhliveskills.com. Breaches or suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct will be taken seriously and dealt with quickly, fairly and transparently.

Any worker who breaches the Code of Conduct will face disciplinary action and depending on severity of the breach, the worker may have their employment terminated.

Recruitment

To ensure we engage the most suitable people to work with children and young people we have the following recruitment practices in place:

- our commitment to child safety is included in all job advertisements
- clear position descriptions that include our commitment to child safety and wellbeing
- face-to-face interviews that include behavioural questions to determine the applicant's knowledge of child safeguarding
- at least 2 referee checks and qualification checks.

In accordance with the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016, our organisation is registered with the Department of Human Services (DHS) Screening Unit and we link all Working with Children Checks (WWCC) to our registration. All persons running the organisation (e.g. business owner, board/committee members, directors, managers etc) and all workers over the age of 14 years who will be working in a role with, or who have contact with children and young people must hold a current, not prohibited WWCC issued by the DHS Screening Unit and provide evidence of this prior to employment and renew this every 5 years. A person will be taken to have contact with a child if:

- the person has physical contact with the child; or
- is in close physical proximity to the child; or
- communicates with the child (whether orally or by written, electronic or other means).

We will verify the accuracy of all WWCCs in the DHS Screening Unit portal as required by law.

All workers in risk assessed roles in registered NDIS organisations must have a valid NDIS worker check clearance if they are in a key personnel role (e.g. CEO, board member etc), involved in direct delivery of services to a person with a disability or are likely to have more than incidental contact with people with a disability. A worker will be taken to have more than incidental contact if their role includes:



- physically touching a person with a disability
- building a rapport with a person with disability as an integral and ordinary part of the performance of normal duties; or
- having contact with multiple people with disability as part of the direct delivery of a specialist disability support or service, or in a specialist disability accommodation setting.

Evidence of a valid NDIS worker check must be provided prior to employment and renewed every 5 years. We will verify the accuracy of all NDIS worker checks in the DHS Screening Unit portal as required by law.

We will immediately contact the DHS Screening Unit when we become aware of assessable information regarding any person involved with our organisation, including any serious criminal offence, child protection information, or disciplinary or misconduct information.

Training, Supervision and Support for Workers

We have strategies in place to supervise, train and support workers to understand our organisation's child safe policy, their mandatory reporting obligations, how to build culturally safe environments and their responsibilities to create a child safe and friendly environment. Our strategies include:

- Training:
 - as part of their induction, ensure all workers read and understand the Mandatory Reporting Information Booklet available at: https://dhs.sa.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/103179/CSE-Mandatory-notification-information-booklet.PDF/
 - complete 'Keeping Children and Young People Safe' training via NGO Training Centre every three years.
 - complete 'Responding to Risk of Harm, Abuse and Neglect' if they will provide support to children on school sites training every 3 years
 - include child safety as a standing item on meeting agendas
- Supervision:
 - regular supervision sessions that include a focus on child safety and wellbeing
- Support:
 - an induction process for all new workers including a copy of this policy
 - regular performance appraisals that discuss child safeguarding
 - appointing a child safety officer who has an educative role within our organisation.



Reporting and Responding to Harm or Risk of Harm

We aim to ensure that children and young people are safe from harm and risk of 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.

Mandated reporters in our organisation are workers who:

- provide services to children and young people
- hold a management position in the organisation the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of those services to children and young people.

Mandated reporters have a legal obligation to report direct to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 as soon as practicable if they have a suspicion that a child or young person has been harmed or may be at risk of harm. Serious concerns that must be reported to CARL include: serious harm, serious injury, chronic neglect or when the child is in the care of the Department for Child Protection and they are suspected to be at risk. If the concern is not defined as serious and requiring urgent child protection response, reporting via the online Child Abuse Report Line (eCARL) is permitted at <https://ecarl.sa.gov.au/>. If the child or young person is at immediate risk, report to South Australia Police (SAPOL) on 000.

Even if not a mandated reporter, any person can report harm or risk of harm to a child or young person. The non-mandated reporter who identifies the harm or risk of harm is encouraged to make the report to authorities and can request the support from another worker to do so if required.

Information about making appropriate reports of harm or risk of harm is available from the South Australian Department for Child Protection website:
<https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse>.

All adult workers (even if not a mandated reporter) have a legal obligation to report child sexual abuse by another worker to the police and to protect a child from sexual abuse by another worker. Failure to meet these obligations may be considered a criminal offence.

Following a report being made to CARL or SAPOL workers must make an internal report to management. We will be guided by the Department for Child Protection and/or SAPOL after a report has been made as to whether we can conduct an internal investigation.

If a worker is reported to CARL or SAPOL for causing harm or risk of harm to a child or young person, they will be removed from any role that involves working with any child or young person until authorities have concluded their investigation.



We will notify the Central Assessment Unit (Department of Human Services: <https://www.dcsiscreening.sa.gov.au/>) as soon as practicably possible if an worker or volunteer who has a Working With Children Check (WWCC) and we becomes aware:

- *that the person is prohibited from working with children under a law of the Commonwealth, or of another State or Territory; or*
- *that the person is, or becomes, a registrable offender under the Child Sex Offenders Registration Act 2006; or*
- *the person makes a disclosure to the employer under section 66 of the Child Sex Offenders Registration Act 2006.*
- *Employer becomes aware of any assessable information in relation to the person. This includes serious criminal, child protection and discipline and misconduct information that may indicate that the individual may pose a risk of harm to children.*

The Central Assessment Unit will risk assess the information and make a decision. We will only be notified by the CAU if the worker is prohibited from Working With Children Check.

Following a report to CARL or SAPOL we will support the child or young person by:

- referring the child, young person or their family to other appropriate services
- continuing to provide a service to the child, young person and their family and monitor their circumstances.

We will document all information received regarding the report and store this securely in a separate file.

Reporting and Responding to General Complaints or Feedback

Providing opportunities for complaints and feedback ensures that children, young people and their families feel valued and respected and enables us to improve the quality of our service. Children, young people and their families are informed that they can provide feedback or make a complaint in their service agreement and as part of their welcome pack when they join the organisation.

Compliments, complaints or feedback can be provided verbally to any worker, via our Feedback Form on www.ahhlifefskills.com/Forms, direct to management by telephone on 0429 323 221 or via email at hr@ahhlifefskills.com.

We will deal with all complaints and feedback received promptly, sensitively and fairly. We will:

- listen to the complaint/feedback
- the person receiving the complaint will make a record of it if received verbally
- advise of the time expected for an outcome
- if a worker receives a complaint, they must forward it to management as soon as possible



- management will respond to the complainant with an outcome in a timely manner
- clearly document and securely store decisions and actions taken in response to complaints and feedback
- make sure that procedural fairness is followed at all times.

If the child, young person or their family is not happy with the outcome from the complaints process they can contact:

- Department of Human Services: <https://www.dcsiscreening.sa.gov.au/> Tel: [1800 952 962](tel:1800952962) (Disability Services)
- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission: <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/contact-us> Tel: [1800 035 544](tel:1800035544)
- Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner Tel: 8226 8666
- Australian Human Rights Commission Online: www.humanrights.gov.au/ Tel: 1300 656 419
- South Australian Equal Opportunities Commission (for complaints relating to discrimination) Online: www.eoc.sa.gov.au Tel: 08 8207 1977.

Risk Management

Identified risk	Actions to minimise risk
Physical contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical contact must be appropriate to the delivery of services being provided • if 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 • unnecessary physical contact is not allowed
Online communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cyber safety and social media guidelines are in place and provided to all workers • appropriate supervision is provided for all online activities • workers must not communicate with children or young people via social media
Transport of children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workers must have approval to transport a child or young person • parents/guardians must provide consent before transporting a child or young person • worker must have a valid, unrestricted driver's licence



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vehicle must be registered, insured and in roadworthy condition • worker must not be alone in a vehicle with a child or young person
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children and young people are to be supervised by parents/guardians/delegated support at all times
Taking images of children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consent of child/young person and their parent/guardian required • disclosure will be made to the child/young person and parent/guardian as to how the image is to be used • images must be presented in a way that de-identifies the child or young person
Physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain a risk register that is reviewed annually to ensure effectiveness • conduct risk assessments for all activities • ensure all equipment is in good working order
Privacy and confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • documents containing confidential information will be stored securely with restricted access • digital files containing confidential information will be protected electronically with restricted access • workers must not disclose information regarding any child or young person without written consent of the child, young person and their parent/guardian unless legally required to
Overnight and/or off-site activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consent of parent or guardian must be given • privacy when children or young people are bathing, toileting and dressing must be provided • children and young people will not be left under the supervision of unauthorised persons • sleeping arrangements will not compromise the safety of children or young people such as unsupervised sleeping arrangements, or children or young people sharing a bed or an adult sleeping in the same bed as a child or young person • children and young people have the right to contact their parents, or another adult, if they feel unsafe, uncomfortable, or distressed during the stay



Change room requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a minimum of one adult of the same gender as the children or young people must be present• supervision will be provided ensuring the child or young person's right to privacy• adults must not shower or change whilst supervising children or young people• phones, cameras and recording devices must not be used in change room
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Related Policies and Procedures

Child Safe Environment Policy Easy-to-Read Version

Risk Management Policy and Procedure

Incident Management Policy and Procedure

AHH Lifeskills Code of Conduct

NDIS Code of Conduct

Policy Review

We will, at a minimum, review this policy and the related procedures once every 5 years as required by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017. We will also review this policy when:

- new or added risks are identified for children or young people, which may require a change in the policy or procedures
- a critical incident occurs where a child or young person has experienced harm through involvement in the organisation
- concerns are raised by anyone involved in your organisation about child safety or welfare in the organisation
- awareness or compliance to the child safe policy and/or procedures is low
- legislative changes/requirements.

We will lodge a new child safe environments compliance statement with the Department of Human Services each time we review and update this policy.

Policy date: 04/03/2025

Review date: 04/03/2030