Child Safety Policy

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of a Child Safety Policy in South Australia is to ensure the protection, safety, and well-being of children and young people in all environments where they interact, learn, and participate. It is a commitment to creating a culture that actively prevents child harm or risk of harm, promotes child protection, and supports the rights and best interests of children and young people throughout the state.

The primary goal of this policy is to establish a framework that safeguards children from any form of harm, or exploitation. By implementing comprehensive child protection measures, South Australia

aims to create an environment where children feel safe, valued, and empowered to thrive.

The Child Safety Policy outlines clear guidelines and procedures for organizations and individuals responsible for the care, supervision, and engagement of children. It sets expectations for behaviour, provides guidance on identifying and reporting concerns or incidents, and promotes a consistent and robust response to allegations of child harm.

The key components that make up this Child Safe Environment Policy include:

1. Prevention and awareness: Encouraging proactive measures to prevent child harm or risk of harm through education, training, and awareness programs for staff, volunteers, and parents. This includes promoting a culture of vigilance and fostering a child-centered approach to decision-making.

2. Screening and selection: Implementing rigorous screening and selection processes for individuals working or volunteering with children, including background checks, reference checks, and verification of qualifications. This helps to ensure that only suitable and trustworthy individuals are entrusted with the care of children.

3. Code of conduct: Establishing a comprehensive code of conduct that outlines expected behaviour when interacting with children. This code emphasizes the importance of respectful and appropriate conduct, maintaining professional boundaries, and ensuring the child's physical and emotional safety.

4. Reporting and response: Providing clear procedures for reporting suspected child harm or concerns to the appropriate authorities, as well as mechanisms for responding to disclosures or allegations of harm . This ensures that incidents are addressed promptly, professionally, and in compliance with legal obligations.

5.Continuous improvement: Promoting ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and review of the policy and associated practices to identify areas for improvement. Regular training, communication, and engagement with stakeholders help to foster a culture of continuous learning and refinement of child protection measures.

South Australia recognizes that the protection and well-being of children are collective responsibilities shared by the government, organizations, communities, families, and individuals. By establishing and adhering to a Child Safe Environment Policy, South Australia endeavours to create an inclusive and nurturing environment that upholds the rights and safety of children, helping them to grow and thrive in a society free from harm.

Scope of Policy

1. Applicability:

This Child Safe Environment Policy applies to all individuals and entities involved in activities or programs that involve children, young people, and families. This includes, but is not limited to:

·Employees of the organization

·Volunteers

·Contractors

·Work experience students

·Children and young people participating in the organization's activities.

·Families or guardians of children involved in the organization's programs.

2. Collective Terminology:

Throughout this policy, the term "personnel" will be used to collectively refer to individuals associated with the organization, including employees, volunteers, contractors, and work experience students.

3. Acceptance and Compliance:

To ensure the effective implementation of the Child Safe Environment Policy, all personnel associated with the organization will be required to agree in writing to accept and act in accordance with the policy. This agreement signifies their commitment to upholding the principles and standards outlined in the policy and prioritizing the safety and well-being of children and young people.

4. Obligations for Contractors and Parties:

In recognition of the importance of maintaining a child safe environment across all aspects of the organization's operations, the organization will require parties such as contractors, subcontractors, and other external entities to accept and act on the policy as a condition of their contracts or agreements. This ensures that all individuals and entities involved in providing services or support to the organization are aligned with the organization's commitment to child protection and safety.

By establishing a comprehensive Child Safe Environment Policy and extending its application to various stakeholders, the organization aims to foster a culture of safety, accountability, and collaboration, where everyone involved recognizes their role and responsibilities in creating and maintaining a child safe environment.

Communication of Child Safe Policies

As mandated by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, our organization acknowledges the requirement to provide access to our child safe environment policies and procedures. We are committed to ensuring transparency and facilitating access to this essential information for various stakeholders.

1. Children, Young People, and Families:

a.Our organization makes its child safe policy and procedures available to children, young people, and families in a manner that is easily accessible and understandable to them.

b.This information may be provided as part of a welcome pack or information package distributed to children, young people, and families when they engage with our organization's activities or programs.

c.Where appropriate, child-friendly versions of the policy and procedures may be developed, utilizing age-appropriate language, visuals, or formats to enhance understanding.

2. Employees and Volunteers:

a.Our organization ensures that employees and volunteers have access to the child safe policy and procedures during their engagement with the organization.

b.The policy and procedures are typically provided as part of the recruitment process or induction program for new employees and volunteers.

c.This ensures that individuals joining the organization are informed about their responsibilities and the organization's commitment to child safety from the outset.

d.Existing employees and volunteers may also have access to the policy and procedures through internal communication channels, such as the organization's intranet or dedicated staff resources.

3. Availability on Request:

a.In compliance with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, our organization readily provides a copy of its child safe environment policy and procedures upon request.

b.This can be accomplished through various means, such as:

- oMaking the policy and procedures available on the organization's official website for easy download and reference.
- oResponding promptly to requests for the policy and procedures via email or other communication channels.
- oEnsuring that physical copies of the policy and procedures are available at the organization's main office or other relevant locations for in-person access.

By adopting these measures, our organization aims to uphold the principles of transparency, accountability, and accessibility regarding our child safe environment policy and procedures. We strive to ensure that relevant information is readily available to children, young people, families, employees, and volunteers, empowering them to actively contribute to the creation of a safe and supportive environment for all.

Participation of Families, Children and Young People:

In accordance with National Principles 2 and 3, our organization is committed to actively informing families, children, and young people about their rights and encouraging their participation and feedback. We recognize the importance of creating an inclusive and empowering environment that respects and upholds the rights and well-being of children and young people. The following statement outlines our approach:

1. Listening to Children and Young People:

Our organization values the voices and perspectives of children and young people. We actively listen to their thoughts, ideas, concerns, and feedback in order to create an inclusive and child-centered environment. We strive to provide opportunities for meaningful participation, ensuring that their views are heard, respected, and taken into account in decision-making processes.

2. Involvement and Information about Rights:

a.We believe in empowering children and young people by informing them about their rights. Through age-appropriate and accessible means, we ensure they understand their rights in relation to their safety, well-being, and participation.

b.Our organization provides information and resources to families, children, and young people, such as written materials, workshops, or interactive sessions, to educate them about their rights and the importance of child safety and well-being.

3. Understanding Child Safety and Well-being:

a.We are dedicated to ensuring that children and young people have a comprehensive understanding of what child safety and well-being mean.

b.Our organization employs child-friendly language and age-appropriate explanations to convey the concepts of safety, well-being, and personal boundaries. We provide information that enables children and young people to recognize and respond to potential risks, understand the importance of respectful relationships, and promote their own well-being and that of others.

4. Providing Feedback and Raising Complaints:

a.Our organization actively encourages children and young people to provide feedback on their experiences, programs, and services. We create safe and supportive channels for them to share their thoughts, ideas, and concerns.

b.We provide multiple feedback mechanisms, such as suggestion boxes, anonymous feedback forms, or designated staff members, to ensure that children and young people can express themselves in a manner they feel comfortable with.

c.In the event of a complaint or concern raised, our organization has clear procedures in place for raising and addressing complaints. We prioritize confidentiality, transparency, and a child-centered approach throughout the complaint-handling process. If there is any concerns raised that has any child or young person at risk, a CARL report must be made by the person receiving the complaint, and they should advise the person raising it to do the same.

Through these practices, our organization seeks to foster an environment where children and young people are actively involved, informed about their rights, and empowered to contribute to their own safety and well-being. We are committed to continuously improving our engagement strategies to ensure that their voices are heard, respected, and valued.

Code of Conduct

Our organization recognizes the paramount importance of maintaining a safe and respectful environment for children and young people. In accordance with National Principles 4 and 6, we have developed a comprehensive Code of Conduct that provides specific guidelines and behavioural expectations when working with children and young people. This Code of Conduct focuses on child-cantered behaviours and serves as a practical tool for all individuals associated with our organization. The following details the key aspects of our Code of Conduct:

1. Applicability and Accessibility:

a.Our Code of Conduct applies to all personnel involved in activities or programs that involve children and young people within our organization. This includes employees, volunteers, contractors, and work experience students.

b.The Code of Conduct can be accessed via our organization's website, provided during the induction process, or distributed when individuals become members of our organization. It is readily available to all personnel involved in working with children and young people.

2. Reporting Breaches:

a.Our organization ensures that reporting a breach of the Code of Conduct is accessible to all, including children and young people. We recognize the importance of creating safe and confidential reporting mechanisms that empower children and young people to come forward.

b.Reporting options include designated individuals within the organization who are trained to handle disclosures, anonymous reporting channels, and clear procedures for reporting breaches. The process emphasizes confidentiality, sensitivity, and the best interests of the child or young person.

3. Consequences for Breaching the Code:

a.Breaches of the Code of Conduct are taken seriously and will be managed promptly and appropriately. Our organization is committed to addressing breaches in a fair and consistent manner.

b.Consequences for breaching the Code of Conduct may include disciplinary actions, such as counselling, additional training, suspension, or termination, depending on the severity of the breach and the impact on the child or young person's safety and well-being.

c.In cases involving criminal behaviour, our organization will report the breach to the appropriate authorities as required by law.

4. Code of Conduct within Policy:

a.Our Code of Conduct is an integral part of our Child Safe Environment Policy. It is provided as a separate document within our policy and compliance statement lodgement.

b.By including the Code of Conduct within our policy, we ensure that all personnel understand their obligations, responsibilities, and the expected standards of behaviour when working with children and young people.

c.We are committed to upholding the highest standards of conduct and providing a safe and nurturing environment for children and young people.

Recruitment

Our organization is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of children and young people, as outlined in National Principle 5. We employ robust recruitment strategies to engage only the most suitable individuals to work or volunteer with children and young people. The following information highlights our recruitment practices and adherence to legal requirements:

1. Recruitment Strategies:

a.Position Descriptions: Our organization develops comprehensive position descriptions that include a clear commitment to child safety and well-being. These descriptions outline the expected behaviours, responsibilities, and standards for individuals working with children and young people.

b.Face-to-Face Interviews: Our recruitment process includes face-to-face interviews with candidates. These interviews incorporate behavioural questions specifically related to child safeguarding. We assess candidates' understanding of child protection, their commitment to maintaining a safe environment, and their ability to respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns.

c.Referee Checks: As part of our recruitment process, we conduct at least two referee checks to gather insights into a candidate's previous experience, professionalism, and suitability for working with children and young people. Referees are specifically asked to comment on the candidate's ability to fulfill their responsibilities regarding child safety and well-being.

2. Compliance with the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016:

a.Our organization meets the requirements of the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016, which mandates that staff and volunteers possess a current, 'not prohibited' Working with Children Check (WWCC) issued by the DHS Screening Unit.

b.We ensure that all individuals engaged in working with children and young people undergo the necessary WWCC process and provide evidence of their valid, 'not prohibited' status before commencing their role.

3. Verification of Working with Children Check:

a.For new employees, our organization verifies the accuracy of their Working with Children Check before employing them to work with children and young people. Verification is conducted through the Organization Portal via the DHS Screening Unit.

b.For existing employees, we have established processes to monitor and ensure the timely renewal of their Working with Children Check every five years. We verify that their status remains 'not prohibited' to continue working with children and young people.

4. Reporting Obligations:

a.Our organization recognizes the importance of promptly reporting certain information to the DHS Screening Unit. This includes any serious criminal offenses or other relevant information regarding individuals associated with our organization.

b.We have established procedures to inform the Screening Unit when we become aware of such information, ensuring compliance with reporting obligations and contributing to the ongoing safety and well-being of children and young people.

Through these measures, our organization maintains a diligent approach to recruitment, ensuring that individuals working or volunteering with children and young people possess the necessary qualifications, clearances, and commitment to creating and maintaining a safe environment.

Supervision, training, and support for employees and volunteers

In alignment with National Principles 5 and 7, our organization recognizes the importance of providing ongoing support to staff, volunteers, and other personnel involved in maintaining child safe environments. We are committed to ensuring that individuals are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to fulfill their roles effectively and promote the safety and well-being of children and young people. The following outlines the strategies we have in place to supervise, train, and support our employees and volunteers:

Supervision:

a.Regular Supervision: Our organization implements a system of regular supervision to provide guidance, feedback, and support to employees and volunteers. This includes scheduled check-ins, performance reviews, and opportunities for open communication and discussion of any concerns or challenges related to maintaining a child safe environment.

b.Clear Reporting Channels: We establish clear reporting channels for employees and volunteers to raise any child safety concerns or incidents they may encounter. This ensures that appropriate actions can be taken promptly to address and resolve any issues.

2. Training and Professional Development:

   a.Initial Induction Training: All employees and volunteers undergo comprehensive induction training that includes specific content related to child safety and the organization's child safe environment policies and procedures. This training provides a foundation for understanding their roles, responsibilities, and obligations in maintaining a safe environment for children and young people.

b.Ongoing Training: Our organization conducts regular training sessions and workshops to enhance employees' and volunteers' knowledge and skills in child safeguarding. These sessions cover topics such as identifying signs of harm or risk of harm, responding to disclosures, maintaining professional boundaries, and promoting child well-being.

c.Professional Development Opportunities: We encourage and support employees and volunteers to participate in relevant professional development activities, such as conferences, webinars, or specialized training programs focused on child protection and child-centered practices.

3. Mandatory Notification Training:

   a.Our organization ensures that all employees and volunteers receive training in mandatory notification. The full name of the training is "Mandatory Notification Training for Child Safety and Well-being."

   b.Employees and volunteers are required to complete this training at least once every two years to maintain their knowledge and understanding of their legal obligations in relation to reporting suspected child harm or risk of harm.

By implementing these strategies, our organization aims to provide ongoing support and development opportunities for our employees and volunteers. We prioritize their well-being and ensure they are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to create and maintain safe and nurturing environments for children and young people.

Reporting and responding to harm or risk of harm

Our organization is committed to prioritizing the safety and well-being of children and young people, as outlined in National Principle 6. We recognize the critical importance of reporting and responding to instances of harm or risk of harm promptly and appropriately. The following information highlights our approach in addressing these situations:

1. Mandated Notifiers:

a.Within our organization, all roles are designated as mandated notifiers. These individuals have a legal obligation to report a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

b.All mandated notifiers understand and acknowledge their legal responsibility to report such concerns to the appropriate authorities, such as the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 or South Australia Police (SAPOL) on 000 in cases of immediate risk.

2. Voluntary Reporting:

a.While non-mandated notifiers do not have a legal obligation to report child harm or risk of harm, we strongly encourage them to make voluntary reports if they become aware of any such concerns. This proactive approach helps ensure the safety and well-being of children and young people within our organization.

3. Reporting Process:

a.It is important to emphasize that the individual who identifies the harm or risk of harm is responsible for making the report to CARL/SAPOL. This report is not to be internally reported to another staff member for determination, but is advised to report to the director, who will support if the reporter seeks support.

b.Our organization will be guided by the relevant authority, CARL/SAPOL, to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate following their assessment of the report.

4. Internal Reporting by Mandated Notifiers:

a.If a mandated notifier has already made a report to CARL/SAPOL, our organization may require them to make an internal report. The process for making this internal report will be clearly communicated to the mandated notifier and will align with organizational policies.

5. Legal Obligations of Adult Employees and Volunteers:

a.All adult employees, volunteers, and personnel associated with our organization have a legal obligation to report child sexual abuse to the police and to protect children from such abuse.

b.Failure to meet these obligations may be considered a criminal offense under the Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 (s.64A & s.65).

6. Ongoing Safety and Support:

a.After a report has been made to CARL/SAPOL regarding a child or young person who has been harmed or is at risk of harm by a member of our organization, we prioritize the ongoing safety of the child or young person. We work collaboratively with relevant authorities to ensure appropriate actions are taken to protect the child and mitigate further risks.

b.Our organization provides comprehensive support to children, young people, and their families following a report to CARL/SAPOL. This support may include access to counselling services, referrals to appropriate agencies, and ongoing communication to address their needs and promote healing.

By adhering to these principles and processes, our organization aims to create a safe and supportive environment for children and young people, responding effectively when harm or risk of harm is identified, and providing the necessary support to those affected.

Reporting and responding to general complaints and feedback

Our organization is committed to maintaining an open and transparent environment where children, young people, and their families feel empowered to provide feedback or raise concerns. We value their input as it helps us improve our practices and ensure the well-being of those we serve. The following outlines how we inform and encourage feedback or complaints, as well as the procedure we follow to manage them:

1. Informing Children, Young People, and Their Families:

a.We actively inform children, young people, and their families about their right to provide feedback or make a complaint. We do this through various channels, including:

·Clearly communicating our feedback and complaints process in our child safe environment policy, which is made available to children, young people, and their families.

·Displaying posters or informational materials in visible areas, such as our premises, to raise awareness of the feedback and complaints process.

·Including information about providing feedback or making a complaint in our welcome packs or initial consultation materials.

b.We use age-appropriate and accessible language to ensure that children, young people, and their families understand their rights and feel comfortable engaging with the process.

c.Contact details, such as phone numbers and email addresses, are provided to facilitate communication for feedback or complaints. Alternative methods of communication, such as anonymous suggestion boxes or dedicated online platforms, may also be available to ensure accessibility and confidentiality.

2. Handling Feedback and Complaints:

a.Our organization is committed to dealing with all feedback and complaints promptly, sensitively, and fairly. We value the concerns raised by children, young people, and their families and take them seriously.

b.When receiving feedback or a complaint, we ensure that the individual feels heard, respected, and supported throughout the process. We maintain confidentiality to the extent allowed by law and only share information on a need-to-know basis to address the matter appropriately.

c.Our staff members are trained to respond to feedback and complaints in a compassionate and empathetic manner, providing reassurance and guidance throughout the process.

3. Complaints Management Procedure:

Our organization follows a well-defined complaints management procedure to ensure consistency and fairness in handling feedback and complaints. This procedure includes the following steps:

I. Receipt of Complaint: We document and acknowledge receipt of the complaint, ensuring the complainant is aware that their concern is being addressed.

II. Investigation: We conduct a thorough investigation, which may involve gathering relevant information, interviewing involved parties, and assessing any supporting evidence. The investigation is carried out by an impartial individual or team.

III. Resolution: Based on the investigation, we seek to resolve the complaint in a fair and appropriate manner. This may involve taking corrective actions, providing explanations or apologies, or implementing changes to prevent similar issues from arising in the future.

IV. Communication: We maintain ongoing communication with the complainant, keeping them informed of the progress, outcomes, and any actions taken in response to their complaint.

V. Feedback Review: After the resolution of the complaint, we reflect on the feedback received and identify opportunities for organizational improvement. We value feedback as a catalyst for positive change.

By ensuring a clear and accessible feedback and complaints process, promptly addressing concerns, and following a transparent procedure, we aim to foster a culture of continuous improvement and accountability within our organization. We are dedicated to listening to children, young people, and their families and ensuring that their voices are heard and respected.

Risk Management

National Principle 8 emphasizes the importance of identifying and mitigating specific risks that are relevant to the services our organization provides to children and young people. We prioritize their well-being and safety by implementing comprehensive risk management strategies. The following outlines the identified risks and the actions we take to prevent and manage each of those risks:

1. Identified Risks:

a. Physical Safety Risks: We recognize that children and young people may face potential physical risks within our organization, such as accidents, injuries, or unsafe environments.

b. Emotional and Psychological Risks: We acknowledge the impact of emotional and psychological risks on the well-being of children and young people. These risks may include bullying, emotional harm, or exposure to distressing situations.

c. Online Safety Risks: Given the increasing digital presence in children and young people's lives, we are aware of the potential risks associated with online activities, including cyberbullying, inappropriate content, and privacy breaches.

d. Cultural and Diversity Risks: We acknowledge that children and young people from diverse cultural backgrounds may face specific risks related to cultural insensitivity, discrimination, or marginalization.

e. Supervision Risks: Inadequate supervision or lack of appropriate ratios can pose risks to the safety and well-being of children and young people.

2. Risk Mitigation Actions:

Physical Safety:

· Conduct regular risk assessments of our premises, facilities, and equipment to identify and address potential hazards promptly.

· Implement safety protocols and procedures to ensure a safe physical environment, including proper maintenance, childproofing measures, and adherence to relevant safety standards and regulations.

· Provide adequate supervision and implement appropriate staff-to-child ratios to ensure continuous monitoring and minimize the risk of accidents or injuries.

Emotional and Psychological Well-being:

· Foster a positive and inclusive culture within our organization that promotes respect, empathy, and understanding among children, young people, and staff.

· Implement anti-bullying policies and procedures, along with regular education and awareness programs to prevent and address bullying incidents promptly.

· Train staff members in recognizing signs of emotional distress, creating a supportive environment, and providing appropriate emotional support to children and young people.

Online Safety:

· Develop and enforce a comprehensive online safety policy that outlines appropriate online behaviour, guidelines for internet use, and measures to protect children and young people from online risks.

· Provide age-appropriate online safety education and awareness programs to empower children, young people, and their families with the knowledge and skills to navigate the digital world safely.

· Implement robust cybersecurity measures to safeguard personal information, maintain secure online platforms, and prevent unauthorized access to sensitive data.

Cultural and Diversity:

· Promote a culturally sensitive and inclusive environment that respects and values the diversity of all children and young people.

· Develop and implement cultural competence training for staff to enhance their understanding of different cultures, beliefs, and practices, ensuring they can effectively support and engage with children and young people from diverse backgrounds.

· Foster partnerships and engage with community organizations and cultural groups to ensure the provision of culturally appropriate services and support.

Supervision:

· Establish clear and comprehensive supervision policies and guidelines to ensure adequate supervision of children and young people at all times.

· Provide ongoing training and support to staff members regarding their roles and responsibilities in supervision, emphasizing the importance of continuous monitoring and attentiveness to prevent potential risks.

By identifying and addressing these specific risks, our organization aims to create a safe and supportive environment for children and young people. We regularly review and update our risk management strategies to ensure their effectiveness and alignment with best practices. Our commitment to minimizing and managing risks demonstrates our dedication to the well-being and safety.

Policy Review

National Principle 9 emphasizes the importance of regularly evaluating and reviewing our organization's child safe environment policy and related procedures. We are committed to ensuring that our policies remain current, effective, and aligned with best practices. The following outlines our approach to policy evaluation and review:

Regular Policy Review:

· Our organization acknowledges the legal requirement stipulated by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 to review our child safe environment policies and procedures at least once every five years.

· We recognize that societal and organizational changes may necessitate more frequent reviews to address emerging risks and challenges.

Additional Review Instances:

· We understand that it is essential to review our policies and procedures in response to significant incidents, changes in legislation, industry standards, or best practices.

· We will conduct a comprehensive review if there are organizational changes, such as the introduction of new programs or services, modifications to the organizational structure, or significant updates to our operations.

Compliance Statement Lodgement:

· Following each policy review and update, our organization will promptly lodge a new child safe environments compliance statement with the Department of Human Services.

· This process ensures transparency and demonstrates our commitment to meeting regulatory requirements and maintaining a safe environment for children and young people.

Approval and Review Dates:

· Our child safe environment policy was initially approved on 2/08/2023.

· The next scheduled review of our policy is set for 02/08/2028

· These dates will be clearly indicated on the front page or as a footer of the policy document, enabling readers to identify the most recent version.

By conducting regular policy evaluations and reviews, our organization aims to continually improve our child safe environment practices and ensure their ongoing relevance and effectiveness. We remain dedicated to promoting the safety, well-being, and rights of children and young people within our organization.