

CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY (SA)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCR) outline that children and young people have a right to be safe and cared for, no matter where they are or who they are with. Children have the right to be protected from harm, violence or neglect. When working with children and young people, it is important to understand children’s rights and needs.

We are advocates for children and have a strong commitment to child safety and establishing and maintaining a child safe environment. Children’s safety and wellbeing are paramount at our Service. Our Service embeds the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and promotes a culture of safety and wellbeing to minimise the risk of harm to children whilst promoting children’s sense of security and belonging.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
2.2.3	Child protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

QUALITY AREA 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN		
5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS and NATIONAL LAW	
82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol-free environment
83	Staff members and family day care educators not to be affected by alcohol or drugs

84	Awareness of child protection law
99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
102(A-D)	Transportation of children (risk assessments and authorisations)
103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
104	Fencing
105	Furniture, materials and equipment
106	Laundry and hygiene facilities
109	Toilet and hygiene facilities
115	Facilities designed to facilitate supervision
122	Educators must be working directly with children to be included in ratios
123	Educator to child ratios- centre based services
136	First aid qualifications
155	Interactions with children
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
165	Record of visitors
166	Children not to be alone with visitors
167	Record of service's compliance
168 (h)	Education and care services must have policies- Providing a child safe environment
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
S162 (A)	Persons in day to day charge and nominated supervisors to have child protection training
S165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
S166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline
S167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards

RELATED LEGISLATION

Children & Young People (Safety) Act 2017	Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016
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RELATED POLICIES

Adventurous Play Policy Behaviour Guidance: Bullying Policy	Physical Environment Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
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<p>Child Protection Policy Code of Conduct Policy Cyber Safety Policy Dealing with Complaints Policy Delivery of Children to, and Collection from Education and Care Service Premise Policy Emergency and Evacuation Policy Excursion/Incursion Policy Furniture and Equipment Safety Policy Injury, Incident, Trauma and Illness Policy Interactions with Children, Families and Staff Policy Medical Conditions Policy Nutrition and Food Safety Policy Photograph Policy</p>	<p>Probation Induction and Orientation Policy Recruitment Policy (SA) Safe storage of Hazardous Chemicals Policy Safe Transportation of Children Policy Sleep and Rest Policy Staffing Arrangements Policy Student and Volunteer Policy Sun Safe Policy Supervision Policy Technology Policy Tobacco Drug Alcohol Free Policy Unidentified Dog Policy Water Safety Policy Work Health and Safety Policy</p>
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PURPOSE

Our Service has a legal and ethical responsibility to provide a safe and friendly environment where all children are respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. Children’s safety and wellbeing is paramount, and we aim to take all practical steps to protect children and young people from harm or risk of harm, ensuring a healthy and safe environment. Our Service provides children and staff with an environment free from the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, educators, volunteers, visitors, Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor and management the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations the approved provider must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for providing a child safe environment and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed. (Regulation 168, Regulation 170). The National Law requires management to ensure all children being educated and cared for are adequately supervised and every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury. Our focus is to build a child safe environment which is reflected in our Service policies and procedures and understood and practiced by all educators, staff, volunteers and students.

‘Child safety is everyone’s responsibility.’ (A guide to the Child Safe Standards. p.26. 2020)

KEY TERMS-DEFINITIONS

Code of Conduct	Lists of dos and don’ts which describe acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour
Disclosure	The process where a child or young person conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been harmed.
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 harm or neglect.
Information sharing	Refers to sharing or exchanging information, including personal information about or related to, harm in organisational contexts. The terms refer to sharing information between (or within) organisations, as well as sharing information with professionals who provide key services for children.
Mandatory notifier	A person who is required to notify known and suspected cases of harm or risk of harm to a child to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 All teachers and staff working within an education and care setting are mandated notifiers.
Mandatory reporting	The legislative requirement for selected classes of people to report suspected cases of harm and risk of harm.
National Principles for Child Safe Organisations	Reflect ten child safe standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and are the vehicle for giving recommendations relating to the standards.
Rights of the Child	Human rights belonging to all children, as specified in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.
Wellbeing	Sound wellbeing results from the satisfaction of basic needs.
Working with Children Check (WWCC)	People over the age of 14 years working or volunteering with children in South Australia must, by law, have a valid, not prohibited Working with Children Check. A Working with Children Check is an assessment of whether a person poses an unacceptable risk to children. As part of the process, the Screening Unit will look at criminal history, child protection information and other information.

Definitions sourced from
 ACECQA. (2021). Policy and procedure guidelines. *Providing a Child Safe Environment*.
 Government of South Australia. (2022). Human Services. *Creating a child safe environments policy*.

COMMITMENT TO THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (National Principles 1-10)

Our Service is committed to being a child safe organisation placing the protection of children as a priority of our responsibilities and obligations. Our *Child Safe Environment Policy* complies with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. The National Principles developed by the Human Rights Commission provide guidance for our Service to ensure our policies and procedures, strategies and attitudes, ensure children's safety is paramount.

Our Service has a zero tolerance to harm or risk of harm to a child, and we are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We promote diversity and tolerance and aim to form equitable and positive relationships with children. We ensure children participate in decisions affecting them and listen and respect their suggestions and ideas as detailed in our *Interactions with Children, Families and Staff Policy*. We respond to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm by reporting to the relevant authorities.

We are dedicated in promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability. Our Service will not tolerate bullying or harassment and our *Behaviour Guidance: Bullying Policy* and procedure outlines the preventative strategies and supervision implemented by our Service to deal with bullying and help protect children. Our priority is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and encourage positive relationships.

[Primary policies – Behaviour Guidance: Bullying; Code of Conduct; Interactions with Children, Families and Staff]

COMMUNICATION (National Principles 2 and 3)

We aim to build and maintain positive and respectful relationships with children, families and educators of our Service and prioritise a child safe environment. We communicate regularly and clearly with all stakeholders and ensure our policies and procedures are available to employees, volunteers, families and children and young people. (Reg. 170). Feedback and evaluation of our policies and procedures is welcomed through surveys, feedback or discussions with management.

PARTICIPATION OF FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (National Principle 2)

Our Service ensures families are always welcome and feel comfortable asking questions on how we prioritise child safety. We provide a range of opportunities for consultation and collaboration about decisions about their child's safety whilst at our Service including:

- policy and procedure review
- child protection
- allegations/grievance procedures
- sun safety
- written authorisations- parenting orders
- code of conduct
- inclusivity and supporting children with diverse needs.

We promote a respectful, child safe culture where children concerns are always responded to, and children feel empowered to participate in decisions and provide feedback to educators and staff.

[Primary policies – Interactions with Children Families and Staff]

CODE OF CONDUCT (National Principles 4 and 6)

Management, educators, staff, volunteers and students will adhere to our Service's *Code of Conduct Policy*. All staff members are made fully aware that following breaches of the Code of Conduct and role responsibilities may result in disciplinary action which may lead to termination of employment.

We will:

- adhere to our *Child Safe Environment Policy*, *Child Protection Policy* at all times
- provide adequate supervision of children at all times
- take reasonable action to protect children and young people for risk of harm
- ensure the service premise is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol
- be responsible for their own, and others health and safety
- be a positive role model to children and young people
- respect children's privacy and dignity at all times
- listen and respond appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people
- report any allegations of harm or risk of harm to a child to CARL as mandatory reporter and make an internal report after you have reported to CARL
- notify the approved provider and/or the regulatory authority within 24 hours of any serious incident or complaint as per the National Regulations

- encourage children and young people to 'have a say' on issues that are important to them.

Staff, educators and volunteers must:

- not discriminate against any child, because of age, gender, cultural background, race, ethnicity or disability
- not put children at risk of harm- refusing food/play, making threats, exposing children to inappropriate language or material (movies, internet, photos)
- not develop any 'special' relationships with children or young people that could be seen as favouritism such as the offering of gifts or special treatment.

[Primary policies – Code of Conduct; Privacy and Confidentiality; Probation Induction and Orientation Policy]

RECRUITMENT (National Principle 5)

Our Service maintains a rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection process to ensure the best staff possible based on skills, qualifications, experience and suitability for the position available. All staff participate in robust interviews and have reference checks completed to ensure the applicant's suitability to the role, previous experiences and their commitment to child safe values and practices. All staff are provided with a comprehensive induction process which outlines our Code of Conduct, identifying and responding to harm and risk of harm, grievance processes, and work health and safety.

[Primary policies - Probation Induction and Orientation Policy; Recruitment]

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK (National Principle 5)

Working in conjunction with the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 and Education and Care Services National Regulations, the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children is paramount within our Service and community. A Working with Children Check (WWCC) issued by the Screening Unit of the Department of Human Services is a requirement for people who work in child-related work. It involves a national criminal history check and a review of findings of workplace misconduct and child protection concerns. The result of a Working with Children Check is either Not Prohibited and is valid for five years, or Prohibited, which means they cannot work with children. Cleared applicants are subject to ongoing monitoring and relevant new records may lead to the clearance being revoked.

Management is responsible for the periodic review and maintenance of up-to-date records of employees' Working with Children Check, including the Working with Children Check number and the date on which each clearance expires. Once an employee provides their

WWCC clearance, management will verify the clearance to ensure that it is valid and current. The WWCC will be placed in the individual's file and continue to be updated as required.

Management will immediately contact the Department of Human Services Screening Unit when we become aware of certain information regarding any person involved with our organisation, including any serious criminal offence, child protection information, or disciplinary or misconduct information.

[Primary policy – Child Protection, Recruitment, Staffing Arrangements]

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT – SUPERVISION AND SAFETY CHECKLISTS

(National Principles 5 and 7)

Children's safety is embedded in our day-to-day practices. We ensure effective and adequate supervision is provided to children at all times. Educators will employ 'active supervision' strategies within the service environment and when participating in excursions or transporting children. Consideration will be made for the different ages and abilities of children and the activities that may require different levels of supervision. Sleeping infants and toddlers will be closely monitored at regular intervals and will always be within sight and hearing distance of educators so a child's breathing, and the colour of their skin can be monitored.

Through conducting risk assessments, we assess and manage risks in the physical environment collaborating with children to develop behaviour guidelines for play including adventurous play to ensure their safety. Educators have a sound understanding of their duty of care and responsibilities in ensuring a child safe environment.

Educators conduct regular safety checks to maintain basic standards of safety within our Service. We believe that child safety is a shared responsibility at all levels within our Service. Children are encouraged to speak up about their safety and the safety of their friends by telling an educator if they feel unsafe in a particular situation or environment.

Educators will complete the following daily checklists to assist and record inspections of the physical environment where foreseeable risks may be evident and cause harm or injury to a child:

[Insert safety checks conducted within your Service. For example: indoor safety checklist, outdoor safety checklist etc]

Any findings that require attention will be either dealt with immediately or submitted into the maintenance book depending on priority.

[Primary policies – Code of Conduct; Supervision; Sleep and Rest; Nappy Change and Toileting; Health and Safety, Staffing Arrangement, Supervision]

CHILD PROTECTION (National Principle 6)

Children and young people always have a right to be safe and protected. To comply with legislation and ensure a child safe environment, educators are provided with training and ongoing supervision to ensure they understand that *child safety is everyone's responsibility*. All educators and staff are mandatory reporters and must make reports if they suspect on reasonable grounds, a child is at risk of harm to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 or if at immediate risk, report to South Australia Police (SAPOL) on 000.

All staff are provided with up-to-date training about child protection law and their obligations under this law and to ensure they are confident in following the reporting guidelines within South Australia and adhere to our *Child Protection Policy*. (Reg 84).

Through continual education and training, educators and staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe. Training gives educators and staff confidence to identify, respond and report harm and risk of harm to a child. Nominated supervisors and persons in day-to-day charge must complete a course in child protection approved by the Regulatory Authority on an annual basis.

To protect children and ensure their safety, welfare and wellbeing, management is responsive to report allegations or convictions of harm or risk of harm to a child and child related misconduct by any staff member or volunteer or contractor to the Department for Child Protection. [\[Safe environments for children and young people\]](#)

[Primary policy – Child Protection]

REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO GENERAL COMPLAINTS (National Principle 6)

Feedback from children, families, educators, staff and the wider community is fundamental in creating an evolving Childcare Service working towards the highest standards of care and education. We aim to investigate all complaints and grievances with a high standard of equity and fairness. Our Service believes in procedural fairness and natural justice that govern the strategies and practices, which include:

- The right to be heard fairly

- The right to an unbiased decision made by an objective decision maker
- The right to have the decision based on relevant evidence.

The Approved Provider will ensure the name and telephone number of the person to whom complaints can be made easily is visible at the service. All grievances and complaints will be treated seriously and as a priority. Any complaints that allege a breach of the National Law and Regulations or alleges that the health, safety and wellbeing of a child at the service may have been compromised will be documented and reported to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours. [Primary policy – Dealing with Complaints]

RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL (National Principle 8)

It is a legislative requirement that Management and educators implement a risk management system where they identify and manage hazards and risks within the workplace to ensure a child safe environment. Strategies are in place to make sure child safety (through the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations) and Education and Care National Regulations are embedded across our Service. The key principles of risk management include:

1. Identifying all hazards or potential hazards in the service/residence/venue
2. Assess the risk of harm or potential harm for each hazard
3. Control or manage the risk – Risk Rating Matrix
4. Monitor and improve safety – Risk Assessment Action Plan
5. Evaluate and Review

It is the responsibility of all staff and educators at the Service to complete a risk assessment where children's safety may be jeopardised and when organising an excursion/incursion or any transportation of children. Children's safety must be incorporated into everyday practice within the Service. Common hazards within the Service which may require a risk assessment include:

- non-compliance risk
- cross-infection and infectious disease
- administration of medication
- anaphylaxis procedures and management
- building and equipment (including storage)
- inadequate space for conducting activities and experiences
- hazardous chemicals
- electrical appliances
- food preparation and storage

- environmental influences such as shade, noise etc
- sun safety
- children's behaviours
- water safety
- fire equipment
- pets and/or animals
- inadequate supervision of children
- children's activities and experiences
- Work Health and Safety such as manual handling (e.g., safe lifting children from cots and highchairs)
- non-compliance risk
- hot drinks
- transportation of children (regular outing and regular transportation)
- excursions

To maintain a child safe environment, we will adhere to Service policies and procedures and conduct the necessary checklists and audits the Service has in place.

EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Management will ensure that copies of the emergency and evacuation floor plan is displayed in prominent positions near each exit of the service premises, including indoor and outdoor learning areas.

All staff are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures and regulatory requirements.

Rehearsals for emergency and evacuation procedures, including lock downs, are conducted at least once every 3 months.

[Primary policy- Emergency Evacuation Policy]

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE AUTHORISATION

Our Service prioritises children's safety at all times. We will only release children to an authorised person as named on the child's enrolment form. We request families provide current court orders, and parenting plans to ensure our records are up to date.

National Regulations require our Service to keep a record of children and visitor's arrival and departures, with the signatures of the person responsible for verifying the accuracy of the record and the identity of the person collecting the child.

Educators will work in collaboration with our *Delivery of children to and Collection from Education and Care Premises Policy* and *Student and Visitors Policy* to ensure children feel safe and secure.

To ensure children's safety, educators have a clear understanding of their legal obligation to check identification when a person is collecting a child. To maintain compliance, parents and educators will complete an alternate collection form or advise via email if they authorise a person who is not on their emergency contact form to pick up their child.

[Primary policies – Delivery of children to and collection from and EEC Service; Student and Visitors]

ONLINE SAFETY (National Principal 8)

Our Service is committed to create and maintain a safe online environment with support and collaboration with staff, families and community. Management ensures anti-virus and internet security systems are installed to block access to unsuitable web sites, newsgroups and chat rooms.

Our Service ensures backups of important and confidential data is made regularly and either stored securely offline, or online. Software and devices are updated regularly to avoid any breach of confidential information.

Families are provided with information about our software program which is password protected and used to share observations, photos, videos, daily reports and portfolios. Passwords are not to be shared with others as per our written agreement.

Written authorisation is requested as part of the enrolment process for children to have their photo taken and published as part of promotional marketing or on the app program used by the service. The identity of a child is not published on any platform.

Personal mobile phones are not used to take photos or video of children at the Service.

Only educational software programs and apps that have appropriate content and have been examined prior to allowing their use are used in the Service. Children are always supervised using any technology.

[Primary policies – Cyber Safety; Technology; Privacy and Confidentiality, Code of Conduct]

EQUIPMENT, FURNITURE & MAINTENANCE RECORD

There are several factors that can contribute to a hazard, such as a deprived program, insufficient supervision and dilapidated equipment. To ensure a child safe environment free

from hazards, we have implemented practices and continue to monitor Service policies and procedures that uphold Australian Safety Standards.

The premises and all equipment and furniture used within the Service are audited to ensure all aspects are safe, clean and in good repair. We understand that hazards are specific to developmental stages; educators are aware that materials and equipment need to be checked to ensure they are safe and developmentally appropriate for children. Regular checks occur within the Service to ensure that all toys, furniture and equipment are in good condition and working order.

STORAGE OF HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

We reduce the risk of harm to children and educators by using eco-friendly products where possible. Our Service will endeavour to provide a safe environment where necessary chemical and hazardous equipment are safely stored away from children and handled appropriately.

Management and educators will keep a register of hazardous chemicals used at the Service, including relevant Safety Data Sheets (SDS).

To maintain a safe environment for children, audits and checklists are conducted on a regular basis.

[Primary policies – Safe Storage of Hazardous Chemicals, Administration of Medication]

CONTINUOUS REVIEW (National Principle 9)

To ensure we maintain a culture of continuous improvement, we will ensure our child safe practices are regularly reviewed, evaluated and improved. We aim to ensure all educators, staff and volunteers understand and effectively implement our policies and procedures to provide a child safe environment at our Service. Our policies are reviewed annually and a new Child Safe Environment Compliance Statement will be lodged with the Department of Human Services every 5 years.

We will regularly review and monitor the effectiveness of our Child Safe policies and procedures and invite children, staff members, families and communities to contribute to their development.

Any updates or revisions will be communicated to all stakeholders.

SOURCES

Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
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 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
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 United Nations Convention of Rights of the Child, (1989). (UNCRC)
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REVIEW

POLICY CREATED	FEBRUARY 2023	NEXT REVIEW DATE	FEBRUARY 2024
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