

Kids+
WHEN EXPERTISE MATTERS

STAFF



Client Safety Guidelines

A practitioner's guide to preventing, identifying and responding to risks to children and young people.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Kids+ Foundation client safety guidelines for practitioners

Here at the Kids+ Foundation we pride ourselves on the high-quality services we provide to children and young people living with disability, and their families.

We are a team of highly skilled, qualified and compassionate professionals, who work tirelessly to breakdown barriers for our clients and enable them to live fun, safe and fulfilling lives.

The safety of our clients is our number one priority.

These guidelines will assist you in understanding the role you play in contributing to a safe and inclusive service, space and experience for our clients, from start to finish.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we work, play and rest and pay respects to elders past, present and future.

Acknowledgement of Lived Experience

We would like to acknowledge victims/survivors of child abuse and those close to someone with lived experience. Know that we hear you and that your voice matters.

Distressing Content Warning

This guide provides information relating to child abuse that can be sensitive and distressing for some people. Please look after yourself, and each other.

For more information or support services:

1800RESPECT

Lifeline 13 11 14

Beyond Blue 1300 224 636

Blue knot 1300 657 380

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

REMEMBER: If you are concerned about the immediate safety of someone, call 000

DEFINITIONS

CHILD: a person under the age of 18

YOUNG PERSON: a person aged between 18-25

CLIENT: any NDIS participant receiving services or support from Kids+

PRACTITIONER: any person engaged by Kids+, employee or volunteer

SUPERVISOR: the person a practitioner directly reports to

CHILD SAFETY: Having active measures in place to prevent harm and abuse within Kids+

CHILD RISK: Having active measures to notice and respond to harm and abuse that may be occurring outside of Kids+

CHILD PROTECTION: The government agency tasked with responding to children in need of protection.

CHILD SAFETY



Child Safety

The responsibility of an organisation to have mechanisms in place to make sure the children and young people they work with are safe from harm and abuse.

Child Risk

The responsibility of individuals within an organisation to recognise and respond to any risk to a child or young person.

Child Safety is:

EVERY person at Kids+ has a role to play to make sure it is a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment.

The aim is to:

REDUCE the likelihood of abuse to the young people in its care

INCREASE the likelihood of recognising the signs that a young person might be at risk of, or has experienced abuse

IMPROVE the ability to respond appropriately if a child or young person has experienced abuse.



UNDERSTANDING INTERNAL VS EXTERNAL RISKS

Internal Risks

Risks to children and young people that occur within the organisation and/or involve people within the organisation.

INCLUDES:

- On site, before, during or after a session
- Off site, but during a session
- Under the supervision / duty of care of a Kids+ staff member
- Accidental and non-accidental harm or injury

INVOLVES:

- A Kids+ staff member
- A child or young person who is a Kids+ participant
- Adult to child / Peer to peer

Likely to be a breach of the Kids+ Child Safe Code of Conduct and/or policies.

Is mitigated through the implementation of child safe practices across Kids+.

External Risks

Risks to children and young people that occur outside of the organisation BUT that Kids+ are aware of through disclosures, allegations or suspicions.

INCLUDES:

- At home
- At school
- In the community

INVOLVES:

- A child or young person who is a Kids+ participant
- A family member of a child or young person who is a Kids+ participant
- Another adult (parent / carer/ teacher / support worker)
- Another child or young person

May be a breach of the law or another organisation's Code of Conduct or policy.

Is unable to be mitigated through the implementation of child safe practices across Kids+.

Regardless of where the risk is coming from, you have a responsibility to firstly... **PREVENT IT** and if you can't...

PREVENT IT



NOTICE IT



RESPOND TO IT



REPORT IT



THE LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

In Victoria, organisations working with children and young people are required to comply with the 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards. There are also some important laws in place that relate to Kids+ and the protection of children and young people.

Below, are an explanation of both Frameworks, highlighting the NDIS Practice Standards that are relevant to the safety of children and young people.

Victorian Child Safe Standards

1. Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued
2. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
3. Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
4. Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
5. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
6. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
7. Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused
8. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training
9. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
10. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
11. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

Legislation

International

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC)

National

NDIS – National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013

State

Organisational Liability – Wrongs Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse) Act 2017

Duty of Care – Children, Youth & Families Act 2005

Failure to Protect – Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014

Failure to Disclose – Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014

Mandatory Reporting – Child, Youth & Families Act 2005

Working with Children Checks – Working with Children Amendment Act 2016

Grooming Offence – Crimes Amendment (Grooming) Act 2014

Child Safe Standards – Child Wellbeing & Safety Act 2005

KIDS+ APPROACH TO CLIENT SAFETY

PREVENT IT

Taking actions intended to stop children and young people experiencing harm or abuse.
Anywhere, by anyone.



NOTICE IT

Identifying risks by understanding the indicators in the behaviours of children and young people and the behaviours or others.



REPORT IT

Understanding internal and external reporting obligations to ensure concerns raised are escalated and managed.



RESPOND TO IT

Encouraging safe and supported disclosures, and taking concerns raised seriously, every time.



PREVENT IT

As a Kids+ Practitioner, you are expected to take all possible actions to prevent harm of a child or young person you work with, including those who are utilising our space.

This is achieved by:

- behaving appropriately, in line with the Kids+ Code of Conduct and policies, and
- by intervening and speaking up when you are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person.

It is your responsibility to KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT, DO WHAT IS RIGHT and call out WHAT IS WRONG.

Kids+ Foundation Code of Conduct

AGENCY & VOICE

Act with respect for individual rights to freedom of expression, self-determination, and decision-making in accordance with relevant laws and conventions

PRIVACY

Respect the privacy of people with disability

SAFETY

Provide supports and services in a safe and competent manner with care and skill

INTEGRITY

Act with integrity, honesty, and transparency

QUALITY CARE

Promptly take steps to raise and act on concerns about matters that might have an impact on the quality and safety of supports provided to people with disability

PROTECTION

- Take all reasonable steps to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, exploitation, neglect, and abuse of people with disability
- Take all reasonable steps to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct.



PREVENT IT

Preventing Risk to Children & Young People at Kids+

- ✓ **EDUCATE** yourself – know what is right and do what is right
- ✓ **CALL OUT** poor behaviour – even the little stuff matters
- ✓ **PROMOTE** a culture of safety – put the safety of clients first
- ✓ **INVOLVE** all stakeholders in decision making so they feel included, empowered and a sense of belonging

Reducing Risks to Children & Young People in your Practice

- ✓ **EXPLAIN** what you plan to do – to the child and their parents / family members
- ✓ **SEEK** consent – formally, if you are trying something new, informally, just by checking as you go
- ✓ **LISTEN** to the child or young person, and stop what you are doing if they ask
- ✓ **LOOK** at their body language, what are they telling you? Are they uncomfortable? Do they need a break?



NOTICE IT

Sometimes, children and young people need us to be their eyes and ears, continuously listening, observing and noticing their behaviours and the behaviours of others, to pick up on an indicator that something is not right.

The Royal Commission^o told us that it can take a victim survivor of child sexual abuse between 20-30 years to report their abuse. Imagine having to wait that long. Wouldn't it make more sense if they didn't have to? If the adults around them noticed it, and stepped in early?

This next section steps out the different types of abuse and how we might recognise it. You can use this information to notice both INTERNAL and EXTERNAL risks to children and young people.

Types of Abuse

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Any intentional use of physical force that results in, or is likely to result in, harm to the child or young person.

This includes hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning, suffocating.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Any intentional use of words or acts that causes harm to a child or young person's emotional, psychological, social or developmental wellbeing.

This includes rejecting, isolating, terrorising, ignoring, or corrupting words or behaviours. It also includes exposure to family violence.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Any unwanted sexual behaviour that makes a child or young person feel uncomfortable, threatened or scared, or is illegal.

This includes physical contact, verbal and non verbal communication, exposure to pornography or sexual acts.

GROOMING

Any actions designed to prepare a child or young person for sexual abuse at a later time.

This includes communicating with, or attempting to establish a relationship or other emotional connection with, a child or young person (or their parents or carers).

NEGLECT

When an adult fails to provide a child or young person with basic needs such as food, water, shelter, appropriate clothing, supervision, access to education and health services.



Abuse can happen:

In the family / Outside of the family / In institutions

Abuse can cause:

- Serious mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and/or self harm
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Contact with the criminal justice system
- Relationship difficulties in relation to trust
- Difficulty learning or engaging in education
- Associated social disadvantage such as homelessness, unemployment, and/or social isolation.

NOTICE IT

Reasonable Belief

According to the Victorian Government:

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person, doing the same work, would form the same belief on those grounds, based on the same information.

Grounds for forming a belief are matters of which the person has become aware and any opinions in relation to those matters.

You are not expected to have evidence or proof. That is the role of the child protection authorities and police. You are just expected to have formed a Reasonable Belief.



You may pick up risks during your day to day practice. If you are continuously assessing your client, their mental, physical and emotional capacity to engage in therapy, the environment, their progress, their developmental milestones – you may, in the course of these assessments, also notice risks to a child or young person.

Risks you may NOTICE in your day to day practice include:

- Inability to meet milestones
- Regressive behaviour
- Disconnect or poor attachment to a caregiver
- Disengagement of a caregiver
- New caregivers / step parents, family members in the home
- Physical indicators of risk of harm including holes in walls, smashed windows, poor living conditions or lack of electricity or water.



NOTICE IT

Indicators of Abuse or Neglect in Children and Young People

- Visible signs of distress
- Panic attacks
- Noticeable and sudden changes in behaviour
- Reluctance to be in presence of a particular person
- Disengagement
- Lack of participation
- Destructive behaviours
- Low self esteem
- Secretive behaviour
- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts.
- Location and extent of injury do not fit the explanation given
- Fractured bones, especially in an infant where a fracture is unlikely to occur accidentally
- Signs of internal injury e.g. visual problems, dizziness, abdominal pain, shortness of breath
- Wearing long sleeved clothes on hot days (to hide bruising or other injury)
- Unexplained absences
- Unexplained gifts or money are often signs of sexual exploitation
- Withdrawn, unusually quiet or absent
- Violent and aggressive
- Difficulty forming positive relationships with adults or peers
- Regressive behaviours – bedwetting, sucking thumb
- Flinching or covering with physical touch
- Unusually close to a therapist
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults.
- Demonstrating fear of parents and of going home; running away
- Becoming fearful when other children cry or shout
- Being excessively friendly to strangers
- Being very passive and compliant
- Displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge which is unusual for the child's age
- Excessive masturbation
- Experiencing difficulties in sleeping
- Persistent soiling or bed wetting
- Frequent hunger
- Malnutrition
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing, e.g. Summer clothes in winter



Indicators of Concerning Behaviours in Adults

(Practitioners, Support Workers, Family Members, Carers)

- Spending special time with a child or young person
- Giving gifts to a child or young person or their family members
- Showing special favours to one child but not others
- Ignoring or dismissing rules
- Sneaking special treats to a child or young person
- Touching the child or young person excessively or unnecessarily
- Testing and breaking professional boundaries – small breaches first.

NOTICE IT

You can build your own capacity to identify and notice risks from the beginning of the relationship with the client and their family. The earlier you start collecting information and understanding their story, the easier it will be to identify risks that may arise. Here are some questions, some red flags to look out for and some tools to help you do that along the way.

At the beginning:

- Who is in the family?
- Who lives in the house?
- Other carers / support workers

How can you determine the answers?

How is this information helpful?

- ✓ Ecomaps
- ✓ Genograms

During home visits:

- Changes in behaviour
- Physical indicators
- Other causes of stress or concern

How can you determine the answers?

How is this information helpful?

- ✓ Observations
- ✓ Discussions with parents
- ✓ Discussions with clients

During supervision:

- Discuss risks for each client
- Has anything changed?

How can you determine the answers?

How is this information helpful?

- ✓ Case notes
- ✓ Assessment tools
- ✓ Discussions with other therapists



RESPOND TO IT

Responding to a disclosure or allegation

- ✓ Stay calm
- ✓ Don't ask questions
- ✓ Listen
- ✓ Reassure and validate
- ✓ Confirm immediate safety
- ✓ Explain next steps

Responding to a suspicion

- ✓ Stay calm
- ✓ Confirm immediate safety
- ✓ Consider the facts
- ✓ Case note it
- ✓ Raise it with your supervisor
- ✓ Seek secondary consultation (internally or externally)
- ✓ Use the Structured Professional Judgement Model

Structured Professional Judgement Model used in the MARAM Family Violence Framework.

VICTIM SURVIVOR SELF ASSESSMENT

Speak to the family first. What do they tell you? How do they consider the risk?

EVIDENCE BASED RISK FACTORS

What do we know about the risk factors in this situation and how they line up with what we know generally? Are there any protective factors to balance that out?

Risk Factor Guidance

INFORMATION SHARING

Who else is working with this family who may be able to provide more information that can help us?

INTERSECTIONALITY

What are the other factors here that may increase or change our overall assessment of the risk? E.g. Cultural background, disability or mental illness.

Seeking Secondary Consultation

Internally:

- Supervisor
- Other practitioners
- Social Worker
- Clinical Supervision / Case Review
- Discipline Team Meetings
- Internal Care Teams

Externally:

- Professional Meeting
- External Professionals 1:1
- Child Protection
- Orange Door

If the family you are concerned about are already engaged with a Child Protection worker, reach out to them or their team leader first.

Child Protection

West Division Intake (Rural & regional only) **1800 075 599**
 After Hours **131 278**

Police

000 in emergencies
131 444

Child protection will also contact Police, but if you have concerns about the safety of a child or young person you can contact police too.

The Orange Door

Support and Safety Hubs, known as The Orange Door, help women, children and young people experiencing family violence and families who need support with the care and wellbeing of children

It is free to access help and support through The Orange Door and you do not need a referral.

1800 312 820



REPORT IT

Kids+ receiving and/or reporting child safety concerns

Everyone involved with Kids+ plays a crucial role in protecting children and young people. You must follow the actions below to ensure all child safety and safeguarding concerns are appropriately reported.

Is a child or young person at IMMEDIATE risk of harm?

Yes

Call 000 immediately

No

Are you concerned about an observation, disclosure or allegation related to physical, sexual or emotional abuse, grooming or neglect? (see definitions and explanations in Staff Child Safety Guidelines page 9).

Yes

Raise it with team leader and/or manager by the end of the current working day. Don't go home until you've told someone!

Together, consider the following:

- Does a parent or family member need to be contacted?
 - Is the child at immediate risk now?
 - Do I need to get more information? Use the Professional Judgment Tool on Page 13
- Gather information in preparation of notification to CP and police.

Contact Child Protection West Division Intake (Rural & regional only)
1800 075559 or After Hours on 131278

OR

Contact the family's CP worker if they have one.

Contact the Police 131444 if you are concerned a crime has been committed.

Complete case notes immediately

Complete **Incident Report Form** and log as an incident.

Be sure to include all relevant details including the name of CP worker and Police officer receiving the calls.

FOR MANAGEMENT ONLY

If there is an allegation, disclosure of suspicion relating to the actions or behaviour of a Kids Pus staff member, a Reportable Conduct Notification may be required.

Follow up with child/family and their supports. Debrief with your Team Leader or Manager.

No

Do you think there may have been a breach of a Kids+ Policy or the Kids+ Code of conduct?

YES, I think so.

No, but I am still concerned about something.

Complete case notes by the end of the current working day.

Raise it with team leader and/or manager within two working days. Together, determine if it needs any immediate action or just need to be escalated. You can use the Professional Judgment Model to assist you (see Staff Child Safety Guidelines Page 13).

Complete an **Incident Report Form**:

- If it is an **incident** that occurred at Kids+ or during Kids+ service delivery off site, log as an incident.
- If it is any other concern log it as a **Near Miss**.

Update case notes with the plan to address the concern (e.g. monitor, seek more information etc).

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Kids+
WHEN EXPERTISE MATTERS

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