

Kids+
WHEN EXPERTISE MATTERS

FAMILIES



Child Safety Guidelines

A family's guide to understanding our commitment to the safety of children and young people and our process for speaking up and reporting concerns.

OUR COMMITMENT

We are committed to your child's safety.

We aim to create an environment where your child feel safe and welcome, can thrive, and have the resources and support to reach their full potential.

We have zero tolerance of any harm or abuse and will work actively to prevent it.

We will take concerns about your child's safety and wellbeing seriously and will respond sensitively and promptly.

Your child's safety is our top priority, always.



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.

WHAT IS CHILD SAFETY?

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.

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

KIDS+ APPROACH TO CLIENT SAFETY

We have:

- ✓ A Child Safe Policy
- ✓ A Reporting Concerns Procedure
- ✓ Risk Management Framework to address risks to our clients
- ✓ Internal reporting processes to receive and manage complaints and reports about safety concerns promptly and sensitively
- ✓ Education & Resources to guide our staff
- ✓ Education and Resources to assist parents, families as well as children and young people to understand, identify and respond/report safety concerns.

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 of 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

Our practitioners are expected to take all possible actions to prevent harm of a child or young person.

This is achieved by:

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

It is their 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.



Staff Expectations

This means Kids+ practitioners and staff will:

- Consider yours and your child's rights to have a voice and to be part of decision making
- Do what they can to protect yours and your child's privacy
- Prioritise the safety of your child
- Be honest and open and always talk about issues with you directly
- Speak up if they are concerned about the quality of the care and services being provided to you and your child
- Prevent, notice, respond to and report any concerns of harm or abuse.

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

Indicators of Abuse or Neglect in Children and Young People

It is uncomfortable to think about your child experiencing any kind of harm, but it is important you are aware of the signs. You may be the only person with the ability to notice it. The best way to notice it, is to ask your child through open, gentle and supportive conversations about their safety.

- 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)

You may also notice concerning behaviours in the adults or other people who are active in your child's life.

- 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.



RESPOND TO IT

Your child, or another child in your life may decide you are a safe person to reach out to if they are experiencing harm or abuse. This will help you in the moment, should that happen.

BELIEVE THEM

Even if you don't think it is true it is important that a child or young person feels heard and believed. The way you respond in that moment could determine if they ever speak up again.

PROVIDE A SAFE AND CONFIDENTIAL SPACE

Enable them to speak freely without worrying who is listening and remain calm, they need you to be able to handle it, even if you don't think you can!

LISTEN, DON'T ASK QUESTIONS THAT MAY BE LEADING

This is really important. Use open questions, tell them they are welcome to talk to you but don't ask for details, make suggestions or even tell them they have to tell you everything. There are professionals who are trained in the most effective ways to interview children and young people in relation to serious matters. The wrong question, even if you had good intentions, could jeopardise the investigation or court case.

Remind them it's not their fault and that you will take it seriously

Don't make promises, especially promises about keeping secrets. They need to know they did the right thing by talking to you and that you will take immediate action.

Call 000 if there is any immediate danger.



REPORT IT



How do I raise a concern?

You can let us know directly. You can do this by speaking to a trusted practitioner another staff member or a manager.

You can do this via:

 Phone

 Email

 In person

 Via our online form



You can choose to remain anonymous, however if you do, we are unable to follow up with you. We will still do what we can to resolve the complaint.

Handwriting practice area consisting of 25 horizontal dotted lines.



Kids+
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