



Child Safe Environments Policy

Policy Category: Operational

Policy Statement

Children and young people have a right to be safe, respected and to have their voices heard including when accessing services in the community. Ronald McDonald House South & Central Australia is committed to providing environments (physical and virtual) which are both safe and friendly and where children and young people are supported to reach their full potential.

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people across our Chapter is our priority above any other interests.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers and Board members, and all children and young people who access or come into contact with our Chapter.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of children and young people is central to the way we operate by:

- creating safe environments for children and young people who access or come into contact with our services
- taking appropriate action in response to situations where children and young people are experiencing harm or are at risk of harm

Definitions

At risk of harm

As defined in the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA) A child or young person will be 'at risk' if:

- They have suffered harm, or there is a likelihood they will suffer harm being of a kind against which ordinarily they should have been protected
- There is a likelihood they will be removed from the State for the purpose of:
 - A medical procedure that would be unlawful in South Australia (including female genital mutilation)
 - Taking part in a marriage that would be void or invalid under the Marriage Act 1961 (Cth)
 - Taking part in an activity that would be illegal in South Australia
- Their parent or guardians are unable or unwilling to care for them, have abandoned them, cannot be found or are dead
- They are of compulsory school age and are persistently absent from school without explanation
- They are homeless or of no fixed address.

Child

A person who is under 18 years of age.

Environments	<p>All environments in which we work with children and young people in. Includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our offices • The offices of other organisations • People's homes • Schools • Out in the community • Online environments.
Harm	<p>As defined in the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA): Physical harm or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission) and includes such harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect.</p>
Line manager	<p>A person with direct managerial responsibilities for a particular employee. A line manager can be a team leader, senior officer, manager, business manager or executive manager.</p>
Mandated notifier	<p>As defined in the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA) Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A psychologist • A social worker • Any other employee of, or volunteer in RMHCSA who is engaged in the actual delivery of health, welfare, education, sporting, recreational, childcare or residential services to children and has undertaken child-safe environments training • Any person who holds a management position in RMHCSA, whose duties include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of health, welfare, education, sporting, recreational, childcare or residential services to children.
Young people	<p>A person who is under 18 years of age.</p>

Creating Safe Environments

Recruitment

It is of paramount importance that the children we assist are kept safe and that the environment provided for them is child-friendly, welcoming and secure at all times. We conduct Department of Human Services Working with Children Checks (WWCC) for all employees, volunteers and Board members, including those who do not work with children.

We conduct these checks before we engage these individuals and then every five years during their engagement with us. All candidates are informed that an employment, Board or volunteer offer is conditional on the outcome of a WWCC and reference checks.

A National Police Clearance is also required if undertaking a leadership or Board role, or if a volunteer role requires driving our vehicle.

A current, not prohibited WWCC must be held before a person can work with children and young people. It's not sufficient to only have *applied* for a WWCC unless they have applied for a new WWCC prior to their current WWCC expiring.

If a WWCC has a status of 'prohibited' the person cannot work with children or young people under any circumstances, and the CEO, Board or Leadership cannot make an alternative decision.

Staff Behaviour

Our standards for staff behaviour are detailed in the Code of Conduct and Ethics for Employees, Volunteers and Board Members, Safeguarding Children and Young People Statement and Sarah online compliance training. These documents and training, include our requirements for how staff must behave with families and require sign off by staff indicating they have read and understood them. All staff must be familiar with and comply with the Code of Conduct and Ethics for Employees, Volunteers and Board Members and the Safeguarding Children and Young People Statement.

Risk Management

Managers and Organisational Leaders must consider risks to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people when they identify and assess their operational risks. The requirements and processes for risk management are set out in the Risk Management Policy and Risk Management Procedure.

How We Work

Our Service Delivery Model provides guidance to us on how we must work with families, including children and young people. The service Delivery Model includes principles which guide our work with families and how we apply those principles. The principles and practices are:

- Patient and family centred care
- Strengths based practice
- Trauma informed practice
- Cultural responsiveness

To support the implementation of the practice principles, we are committed to strengthening practice in all aspects of service delivery by embedding a culture of learning and reflective practice across the organisation.

Services for Children and Young People

We plan, deliver and evaluate our services to ensure safe environments for children and young people
We:

- give them information about their rights and what they can expect from us
- deliver services in a way that respects and values the diversity of our consumers
- involve them in the design of our services
- seek the consent of children and vulnerable adults in circumstances where they have a choice
- involve them in decisions that affect them
- give them information on how to provide feedback to us, and opportunities to provide feedback
- hear and respect their voices
- communicate this policy through our website and other means

How We Respond to Suspected Abuse, Neglect, Harm or Risk of Harm

Legal Responsibilities

We have legal responsibilities to respond to suspected abuse, neglect, harm or risk of harm under the following law: Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA). Under this legislation staff, volunteers, board members and sub contracted tutors are considered mandatory reporters.

Signs of physical harm, neglect, psychological or emotional and sexual harm

Staff may become aware of possible abuse, neglect, harm or identify that a child or young person is at risk of harm through either:

- Observation
- Disclosure by the child or young person
- Disclosure by another person – for example a family member or another guest staying at the House

There are many signs that may lead staff to suspect a child or young person is experiencing abuse, neglect, harm or is at risk of harm. There is a list of signs in Attachment 1 – this is a guide only and if staff are unsure, they should discuss with their line manager.

Our Response to the Person

If a staff member becomes aware of or suspects abuse, neglect, harm or identifies they are at risk of harm, they must put the wellbeing of the person first. This will include:

- staying calm and in control of their emotions
- being aware that they may be the first person the person has told, and they may be distressed, scared, angry, they may be feeling guilty or ashamed
- reassuring the person that it is not their fault and that they are not responsible for what has happened to them
- listening carefully but not interrogating or asking leading questions (it is not the staff member's role to investigate)
- acknowledging the person's bravery in telling you and tell them you are pleased they have told you
- not making promises we can't keep – for example not telling them that you will not tell anyone
- maintaining confidentiality within the requirements to report.

Staff Misconduct

Our standards for the conduct of our staff are detailed in our Code of Conduct and Ethics for Employees, Volunteers and Board Members. Complaint managers must inform the CEO when a person makes a complaint:

- alleging a staff member is perpetrating abuse, neglect, harm to a child or young person
- suspecting a child or young person is at risk of harm from a staff member

The CEO will investigate these reports in line with the Complaints Management Procedure.

Staff must report to the CEO where they suspect another staff member is perpetrating abuse, neglect, harm or suspects risk of harm to a child or young person. The CEO will investigate these reports as a suspected breach of the Code of Conduct and of this policy.

Mandatory Reporting

As mandated notifiers we must notify the Department for Child Protection if we suspect on reasonable grounds that a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed, in line with our obligations under the Children and Young People (Safety) Act.

We will notify by contacting the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78.

Internal Reporting

In all circumstances where a staff member makes an external report of suspected abuse, neglect, harm or at risk of harm they must:

- inform their line manager, who will provide them with support
- record the report in Donesafe

Information and Training for Staff

Induction of Staff

We inform staff about this policy in induction sessions. Induction sessions include relevant legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines that may help staff in the delivery of direct support. The induction process requires all staff to:

- Read the Child Safe Environments Policy
- Read and sign the Safeguarding Children and Young People Statement
- Undertake Sarah online compliance training for Safeguarding Children and Young People

Managers will give specific guidance to their staff on their responsibilities under this policy as part of on-boarding and at regular intervals afterwards.

Training of Mandated Notifiers

We will help staff, volunteers, board members and sub contracted tutors to carry out their responsibilities through providing them with the following training:

- Safe Environments - Through their Eyes training every three years
- Department of Education Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect - Education and Care training (RRHAN-EC) (sub-contracted tutors)

Lodging a Child Safe Environments Statement

In South Australia, organisations providing services to children and young people must, by law, provide child safe environments. Every time we review and amend this policy, we must lodge a Child Safe Environment Statement with the Department of Human Services SA.

Associated Policies

- Code of Conduct and Ethics for employees, volunteers and Board members
- Complaints Management Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Statement

Policy Approval & Version History

Version	Description of changes	Approved by	Effective date	Next Review Date
1.0	Creation of Policy	Melissa Monkhouse	22/03/24	22/03/25
2.0	Amended as per recommendations of Department of Human Services	Melissa Monkhouse	16/05/25	16/05/26
3.0	Amended as per brand modernisation guidelines	Melissa Monkhouse	02/06/26	01/06/27