

## Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

### 1. Purpose

Relationships Australia Tasmania is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation providing services to all Tasmanian's including children and young people between the ages of 0 and 18 years.

Our organisation operates from three main office locations: Hobart, Launceston and Devonport and provides a wide range of services. The services specifically related to children and young people including.

- Supporting Children After Separation
- Children's Contact Service
- Family Dispute Resolution Services
- Reconnect
- Family and Relationship Counselling
- Community Based Mental Health Care Services

RA Tas are committed to the rights of children and young people to feel safe and be safe when engaging in our services. We take seriously our responsibility to deliver support in an environment that is caring, nurturing and safe.

We promote equity and respect diversity by:

- actively anticipating child and young person's diverse circumstances and responding effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities
- giving all children and young people access to information, support, and complaints processes, and
- paying particular attention to the needs children and young people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, children and young people with a disability, children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children and young people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and children and young people who are unable to live at home.

Our Board of Directors approves and endorses RA Tas's commitment to zero tolerance of child abuse and to safeguard children and young people from abuse and neglect.

It is the responsibility of all at RA Tas, from executive to staff and volunteers, to:

- protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation by our people;
- be alert to incidents of child abuse and neglect occurring outside the scope of our operations and services that may have an impact on the children and young people to whom we provide a service; and
- create and maintain a child safe culture that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer or access our programs and services.

We expect all within our organisation, regardless of their role or level of responsibility, to act to safeguard children and young people from such harm by:

- adopting the practices and behaviour we have set as our standard when carrying out their roles, and
- reporting any abuse or neglect of which they become aware to our management and/or to external authorities responsible for child protection or to police, regardless of whether that abuse is being perpetrated by personnel within our organisation, or by those outside our organisation including those from the child’s family, extended family, their family’s extended network or strangers.

## 2. Scope

The *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy* applies to all personnel involved with RA Tas.

## 3. Related Documents

The following RA Tas policies must be considered in relation to this document:

- Client Risk Assessment Guidelines
- Code of Ethics
- Code of Conduct
- Practice and Behaviour Guidelines
- Children and Young People Risk Management and Abuse Reporting Policy
- Employee Lifecycle Policies and Procedures

## 4. Related Legislation

In upholding this Policy, the following legislation and guidelines must be considered by all Relationship Australia Tasmania personnel:

- Family Violence Act 2004 (TAS)
- Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 2013 (TAS)
- Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013 (TAS)
- APS Guidelines: Legal and Ethical Aspects of Working with Young People

## 5. Definitions

Definitions are included in Appendix 1.

## 6. Responsibilities

The Board of Directors of RA Tas is responsible for the development and endorsement of the Relationship Australia Tasmania *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy*. It delegates the implementation of the Policy to the CEO. The role of each entity in relation to the development and compliance of the Relationship Australia Tasmania *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy* is detailed in the table below.

Entity	Role/Responsibility
CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the commitment to this Policy and its expectations.</li> <li>• Support policy review on a three-yearly cycle as a minimum or at a time governed by legislation, regulations, or organisational learnings that promote a change to the Policy and all relevant policy or procedural guidelines.</li> </ul>

Entity	Role/Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure compliance to the Policy via an inbuilt review mechanism.</li> <li>• Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow for the development and effective implementation of this policy.</li> <li>• Develop opportunities for regular discussion at all levels to support a culture of openness, continued improvement and accountability to child protection and member welfare.</li> <li>• Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this Policy and its expectations.</li> </ul>
<b>CEO</b> <b>COO</b> <b>CFO</b> <b>Directors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all involved personnel understand their obligations in accordance with the <i>Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy</i> and any relevant policy and procedural documentation. This includes induction, a minimum of one compulsory training session, and regular discussion and guidance at supervision and team meetings.</li> <li>• Ensure the <i>Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy</i> is implemented and adhered to amongst relevant member stakeholders.</li> <li>• Ensure the development and implementation of required internal policy/work procedures and guidelines are in place to support child protection practice in accordance with the expectations of the <i>Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy</i>.</li> <li>• Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation of the <i>Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy</i>.</li> <li>• Ensure to support personnel in a joint way with a decision to initiate any form of action to protect a child or young person from abuse, neglect, grooming or exploitation.</li> <li>• Ensure appropriate supports, such as counselling and formal debriefing, are provided for any personnel involved in a matter relating to responding to a concern for the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person.</li> <li>• Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this Policy.</li> <li>• Proactively share resources and experience in the development of child safe initiatives as they are identified.</li> <li>• Develop opportunities for regular discussion at all levels to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability of child protection and member welfare.</li> <li>• Ensure that our personnel are aware of the appropriate recruitment, screening, and employment practice in relation to individuals with specific roles in working, coaching, or volunteering with children and families.</li> </ul>
<b>All Personnel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a full understanding of the commitments and expectations of this Policy, as well as all other policy relevant to safeguarding children and young people.</li> <li>• To undertake any induction and training in relation to policy and procedures relevant to safeguarding children and young people.</li> <li>• To seek guidance from a supervisor or manager if there is ever any lack of understanding in relation to the commitments and expectations as set out in</li> </ul>

Entity	Role/Responsibility
	<p>this Policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To take action to protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying, exploitation, and harm.</li> <li>• To assist in creating and maintaining a child safe culture and a culture of inclusion and safety</li> </ul>

## 7. Our Commitment

RA Tas is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who access our activities, programs, services, or facilities. Our policies and procedures seek to address risks to child safety and to establish a safeguarding culture and practices. Our Safeguarding Children and Young People policies and procedures are accessible

- in forms that are easy to understand
- have been informed by stakeholder consultation
- communicated to children, young people and their families, our personnel, and the general public.

We regularly review our policies, gain endorsement of changes and advise our personnel of changes.

### **We are committed to safeguarding children & young people**

Through our policy we document our clear commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. We communicate our commitment to all our personnel and give them access to a copy of our policy.

### **Our personnel know the behaviour we expect**

- We ensure that each person involved in delivery of our services to children and young people understand their role and the behaviour we expect in relation to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect.
- We utilise clear position descriptions which clearly state relevant safeguarding requirements.
- We have a code of conduct, code of ethics and practice and behaviour guidelines which are approved and endorsed from the highest levels of our organisation. These codes and guidelines outline our expectations for behaviour towards children and young people. Our personnel are given a copy of and have access to the code of conduct, code of ethics and practice and behaviour guidelines. Our personnel indicate, in writing, that they have read and are committed to the code of conduct, code of ethics and practice and behaviour guidelines.

### **We minimise the likelihood of recruiting a person who is unsuitable**

We have appropriate measures in place to minimise the likelihood that we will recruit a person who is unsuitable to work / volunteer with children or young people. We have recruitment procedures that ensure:

- our safeguarding commitment is communicated to potential applicants for positions
- face-to-face interviews are held which includes safeguarding-related questions
- two professional reference checks are undertaken
- screening checks are undertaken, including identity, criminal record, international criminal record, working with children checks and qualification checks.

## **Induction and training are part of our commitment**

- We provide all new personnel with information during their induction about our commitment to safeguarding including our *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy*, *Code of Conduct*, *Code of Ethics and Practice and Behaviour Guidelines* and *Children and Young People Risk Management and Abuse Reporting Policy*.
- We have a process for ensuring all our personnel complete Safeguarding Children training.
- We support ongoing education and training for our personnel to ensure safeguarding information is provided in an ongoing way.

## **We encourage the involvement of children, young people and their parents**

We involve and communicate with children and young people, and their families in developing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment. We provide information to children and their carers (such as brochures, posters, handbooks, guidelines) about:

- our commitment to safeguarding children, young people and their rights
- the behaviour we expect of our personnel and of themselves
- our policy about responding to child abuse

We have processes for encouraging two-way communication with children and families. We seek their feedback and have a process for responding. We respect diversity and seek to facilitate effective communication and involvement.

## **Our personnel understand their responsibility for reporting child abuse**

Our policy for responding to child abuse is approved and endorsed from the highest levels of our organisation and applies to all our personnel. The policy states that:

- personnel must immediately report abuse or neglect perpetrated by personnel within our organisation or by others, and any concerns with policies, practices, or the behaviour of our personnel.
- personnel must meet any legislated mandatory reporting requirements
- personnel must follow a specified process when reporting abuse or neglect failure to report is a serious misconduct.

Our personnel are given a copy of and have access to the policy and understand the implications of the policy for their role. We document any allegation, disclosure or concern regarding child abuse and monitor responses to all allegations, disclosures or concerns.

## **We maintain and improve our policies and practices**

- We are committed to maintaining and improving our policies, procedures, and practices to safeguard children and young people from neglect and abuse.
- We have assigned responsibility for maintaining and improving our policies and procedures to a 'Safeguarding Children Program Coordinator'
- We monitor our personnel and external providers to ensure appropriate practice and behaviour, and policies are followed.
- We communicate with our personnel to ensure that they understand our policies and that the policies are effective in the workplace.
- We require our personnel to disclose convictions or charges affecting their suitability to work with children and young people and we review police record and Working with Children Checks periodically.
- We have formally reviewed our service delivery to identify and document potential risks to children or young people.

- We undertake formal reviews, at least annually, to identify and document potential risks to children or young people associated with our service delivery.
- We have a procedure to undertake annual reviews, as part of our ongoing compliance with safeguarding requirements.

## 8. Records and Documentation

We retain records of changes to this document (see 10. Monitoring and Review).

## 9. Communication

RA Tas commits to ensuring our *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy* is communicated to:

### Service users

- on our website
- in age-accessible formats for children and young people
- as part of enrolment forms and program information provided to parents and families

### All 'Involved' Personnel

- during recruitment and induction processes
- during compulsory training on safeguarding children and young people policies and procedures
- on agendas for team meetings
- when there are any updates or changes to this document

## 10. Monitoring and Review

This document will be reviewed at least every 3 years, after consultation. Some circumstances may trigger an early review, this includes but is not limited to legislative changes, organisational changes, incident outcomes and other matters deemed appropriate by the Chief Executive Officer. We retain records to document each review undertaken. Records may include minutes of meetings and documentation of changes to policies and procedures that result from a review.

External audit and verification based on a sample, conducted by the Australian Childhood Foundation shall occur at 3 yearly intervals.

## 11. Supporting Resources

RA Tas Child Risk Assessment Tool
Core Competency – Child Safety
Reporting of Notifiable Client Matters Policy and Procedures
Client Risk Assessment Guidelines

## Appendix 1

Term	Definition
<b>Bullying</b>	<p>Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person or group and is generally an act that is repeated over time. Bullying has been described by researchers as taking many forms which are often interrelated and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Verbal</i> (name calling, put downs, threats);</li> <li>• <i>Physical</i> (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting);</li> <li>• <i>Social</i> (ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating); and/or</li> <li>• <i>Psychological</i> (spreading rumours, stalking, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions).</li> </ul>
<b>Child or young person</b>	A person under the age of eighteen years.
<b>Practice and Behaviour Guidelines</b>	The Practice and Behaviour Guidelines aim to identify and prevent behaviour that may be harmful to children and young people in our support service communities. The Safeguarding Code of Conduct outlines what is and is not acceptable behaviour or practice when working or engaging with children and young people.
<b>Direct role in providing activities, programs and services to children and young people</b>	A direct role is considered one that has contact with children and young people that is not incidental, but normally part of providing a service, program or activity for children and young people. This direct delivery may require regular physical contact and forms of ongoing communication. For example, coaching.
<b>Emotional or psychological abuse</b>	Can occur where the behaviour of their parent or caregiver damages the confidence and self-esteem of the child or young person, resulting in serious emotional disturbance or psychological trauma. This can include a range of behaviours such as excessive criticism, withholding affection, exposure to domestic violence, intimidation or threatening behaviour.
<b>Family Violence</b>	Family violence occurs when children or young people are forced to live with violence between adults in their home. It is harmful to children or young people. It can include witnessing violence or the consequences of violence. Family violence is defined as violence between members of a family or extended family or those fulfilling the role of family in a child or young person's life. Exposure to family violence places children and young people at increased risk of physical injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.
<b>Grooming</b>	Grooming is when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a child or young person with a view to abusing them at some stage. There is no set pattern to groom a child or young person. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period before the abuse begins. The child may be given special attention and, what starts as an apparently normal

Term	Definition
	display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Other perpetrators may draw a child or young person in and abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom children but abuse them without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, social media or by other technological channels.
<b>Harm</b>	<p>Harm to a child or young person, is defined as any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological, or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical, psychological, or emotional abuse or neglect</li> <li>• sexual abuse or exploitation</li> <li>• a single act, omission, or circumstance; and</li> <li>• a series or combination of acts, omissions, or circumstances.</li> </ul>
<b>Neglect</b>	<p>Neglect is the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide the child or young person with the basic necessities of life. Such neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, clean water, medical attention or supervision to the extent that the child or young person's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.</p> <p>Categories of neglect include physical, medical, abandonment or desertion, emotional and educational neglect. The issue of neglect must be considered within the context of resources reasonably available.</p>
<b>Personnel</b>	All staff, volunteers and students who work for the organisation whether in a paid or unpaid capacity.
<b>Physical abuse</b>	<p>Physical abuse occurs when a person subjects a child or young person to non-accidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a child or young person. Physically abusive behavior includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, excessive and physically harmful over training, and kicking. It also includes giving children or young people harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol or poison. Certain types of punishment, whilst not causing injury can also be considered physical abuse if they place a child or young person at risk of being hurt.</p>
<b>Sexual abuse</b>	<p>Sexual abuse occurs when an adult or a person of authority (e.g. older) involves a child or young person in any sexual activity. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority or position over the child or young person for their own benefit. It can include making sexual comments, engaging them to participate in sexual conversations over the internet or on social media, kissing, touching their genitals or breasts, oral sex or intercourse with a child or young person. Encouraging a child or young person to view pornographic magazines, websites and videos is also sexual abuse. Engaging children or young people to participate in sexual conversations over the internet is also considered sexual abuse.</p>
<b>Sexual exploitation</b>	<p>Sexual exploitation occurs when children or young people are forced into sexual activities that are then recorded in some way and/or used to produce pornography. Such pornography can be in the form of actual photos or videos or published on the internet. Exploitation can also involve children or young people who are forced into prostitution.</p>

**Approval and Endorsement:**

<b>Approved By:</b>	Michael Kelly (Chief Executive Officer)
<b>Endorsed By:</b>	Board of Relationships Australia Tasmania
<b>Date of Endorsement:</b>	21/12/2021
<b>Review Date:</b>	30/09/2022