



Practice and Behaviour Guidelines

1. Purpose

Relationships Australia Tasmania (RA Tas) aims to provide children and young people with a positive and enriching environment that promotes their safety, wellbeing, and development.

We are committed to safeguarding children and young people in our care and ensuring that they feel and are safe. Accordingly, we wish to ensure that our staff strive for the highest possible standards with respect to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. To that end we have developed these *Practice and Behaviour Guidelines* to identify clear expectations for our behavior towards and in the presence of children or young people, and so prevent, behaviour that may be harmful to the children and young people in our care.

These *Practice and Behaviour Guidelines* have been developed to protect children and young people engaged in our service. They have been formally approved and endorsed by our Chief Executive Officer and Leadership Group.

These *Practice and Behaviour Guidelines* should be read in conjunction with:

- the specific requirements of your role as defined in your 'position description' statement
- our relevant policy and procedure documents, including our:
 - 'Safeguarding Children and Young People' Statement
 - Children and Young People Risk Management and Abuse Reporting Policy
 - Children and Young People Risk Management and Abuse Reporting Procedure
 - Code of Ethics
 - Code of Conduct
- all applicable policies and laws, including in relation to privacy, confidentiality, information sharing and record keeping
- general community expectations in relation to appropriate behaviour between adults and children.

As part of your commitment to observing these *Practice and Behaviour Guidelines* you will be required to sign an RA Tas commitment statement to these Guidelines, the *Code of Conduct*, and the *Code of Ethics*.

We consider a failure to observe these guidelines as misconduct and will take appropriate disciplinary action. Such disciplinary action may, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct, include suspension while matters are investigated and/or dismissal. In addition to any internal disciplinary proceedings, we will report to the police all instances in which a breach of the law has or may have occurred.

There may be exceptional situations where these guidelines do not apply, for example, in an emergency. However, it is crucial that, where possible, you seek authorisation from your manager prior to taking action that contravenes these guidelines or that you advise your manager as soon as possible after any incident in

which these guidelines are breached.

2. Related Documents

The following Relationships Australia Tasmania policies must be considered in relation to this document:

- Code of Conduct
- Code of Ethics
- Children and Young People Risk Management and Abuse Reporting Policy and Procedure
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

3. Related Legislation

Our guidelines comply with relevant legislation.

- 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

4. Scope

All personnel, from our Board, CEO and Senior Managers to casual staff are required to commit to and abide by these Practice and Behaviour Guidelines.

5. Responsibilities

Position	Responsibilities
CEO	Implement policy and procedures across the organisation Ensure staff have access to and understand these guidelines and related policies and procedures Ensure all managers/supervisors have access to support and advice to understand and implement procedures
Workforce / HR / Quality	Review and update this document and supporting resources in consultation with relevant stakeholders Support the coordination of the safeguarding children and young people framework and implementation Provide training and advice in the application of procedures
Managers and Supervisors	Ensure procedure is followed and implemented.
All Personnel	Compliance with procedure

6. Key Requirements

Our *Practice and Behaviour Guidelines* address the major areas where you interact with the children and young people who take part in our service and safeguard them from abuse and neglect.

Sexual Misconduct

Under no circumstances is any form of 'sexual behaviour' to occur between, with, or in the presence of, children or young people participating in any of our services. Engaging in sexual behaviour while participating in our service is prohibited even if the young persons involved may be above the legal age of consent.

'Sexual behaviour' needs to be interpreted widely, to encompass the entire range of actions that would reasonably be sexual in nature, including but not limited to:

- 'contact behaviour', such as sexual intercourse, kissing, fondling, sexual penetration or exploiting a child through prostitution
- 'non-contact behaviour', such as flirting, grooming, sexual innuendo, inappropriate text messaging, inappropriate photography or exposure to pornography or nudity.

Positive guidance (discipline)

We strive to ensure that children and young people participating in our service are aware of the acceptable limits of their behaviour so that we can provide a positive experience for all participants. Children and young people are encouraged to feel safe and be safe and have positive relationships and friendships with their peers.

Wherever possible, children and young people are encouraged to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities, especially on issues that are important to them. Children and young people are given information about their safe participation in organisational activities, including having access to information about child abuse prevention programs.

However, there are times when staff may be required to use appropriate techniques and behaviour management strategies to ensure:

- an effective and positive environment
- the safety and/or wellbeing of children, young people or personnel participating in our service.

We require our staff to use strategies that are fair, respectful, and appropriate to the developmental stage of the children or young people involved. The child or young person needs to be provided with clear directions and given an opportunity to redirect their misbehaviour in a positive manner.

Under no circumstances are our staff to take disciplinary action involving physical punishment or any form of treatment that could reasonably be considered as degrading, cruel, frightening or humiliating.

Adhering to professional roles and boundaries

RA Tas Staff should not, of their own volition or at the request of a client, act outside the confines of their duties (as specified in their position description or RA Tas Policy) when helping to deliver our services.

RA Tas Staff:

- Must not provide transportation for children and young people unless specifically authorised to do so by the relevant Director or COO.
- Must not engage in activities with children and young people who are clients of RA Tas outside of authorised RA Tas services.

- Must not provide any form of support to a child or young person of their family, unrelated to authorised RA Tas services
- Must not seek contact with children or young people (or former clients) outside of authorised RA Tas services.
- Must not accept an invitation to attend any private social function at the request of a child or young person, or their family who has participated, or is participating, in RA Tas services.
- Must not develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children).
- Must not engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities).

If any RA Tas staff member becomes aware of a situation in which a child or young person requires assistance that is beyond the confines of that person's role, or beyond the scope of our organisation's usual service, they should at the earliest opportunity:

- refer the matter to an appropriate support agency or
- refer the child or young person to an appropriate support agency or
- contact the child or young person's parent or guardian, and
- seek advice and inform management of any of the above.

Use of language and tone of voice

Language and tone of voice used in the presence of children and young people should:

- Provide clear direction, boost their confidence, encourage, or affirm them
- Not be harmful to children – in this respect, avoid language that is:
 - Discriminatory, racist, or sexist
 - Derogatory, belittling, or negative (for example, by calling a child a 'loser' or telling them they are 'too fat').
 - Intended to threaten or frighten, profane or sexual

Promoting equality and diversity

All staff must ensure that their approach and interactions with children and young people are sensitive, respectful, and inclusive of all identities, backgrounds and abilities.

Where RA Tas is involved with children and young people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, gender diverse or identify as LGBTQI+ or who have a disability, our staff will promote their safety (including cultural safety), participation and empowerment.

Supervision

RA Tas staff are responsible for supervising the children and young people to which our organisation provides services to ensure those clients:

- Engage positively with RA Tas services
- Behave appropriately with one another
- Are in a safe environment and are protected from external threats

Our staff are required to, where possible, avoid one-to-one unsupervised situations with children and young people to whom RA Tas provides services. Where possible staff are to conduct activities and/or discussions with children and young people in view of other staff or utilise our 'live streaming' technology.

Use of electronic and online communications

Wherever possible, email, text messages and other online communications sent to a child or young person should be copied to their parent or guardian.

Where a parent or guardian is not included in the communication:

- RA Tas restricts such communication to issues directly associated with delivering services, such as advising that a scheduled event is cancelled.
- Staff must limit the personal or social content in such communications to what is required to convey the service-related message in a polite, friendly manner. Do not communicate anything that a reasonable observer could view as being of a personal or sexual nature.
- Staff do not use such communication to promote unauthorised 'social' activity or to arrange unauthorised contact.
- Staff do not request a child or young person to keep a communication a secret from their parent or guardian.
- Staff do not communicate with children or young people using internet chat rooms or similar forums such as social networking sites or game sites.

All our staff are required to follow the RA Tas *Guidelines for Electronic Communication with Clients*, the *ICT Policy* and *Social Media Policy* in relation to the use of RA Tas computers.

RA Tas staff are required to monitor children and young people when they use RA Tas electronic communication equipment to ensure that they do not inadvertently place themselves at risk of abuse or exploitation via social networking sites, gaming sites or through web searches, or inappropriate email communication.

Use, Possession or Supply of alcohol and Drugs

RA Tas staff must not use or possess a illegal drugs or alcohol, be incapacitated by any other legal drug such as prescription or over the counter drugs, supply alcohol or drugs (including tobacco) to children or young people participating in our service. The use of legal drugs other than alcohol is permitted, provided such use does not interfere with your ability to care for children involved in our service.

Giving Gifts

Giving of gifts by RA Tas service delivery staff to children and young people to whom we provide service is subject to:

- Obtaining prior authorisation from a manager,
- The parent or guardian being made aware of any gift given.

Photographs of children and young people

Children and young people to whom RA Tas deliver services are to be photographed while involved in our services only if:

- A Manager has granted prior and specific approval
- A consent form is signed by the client, or their parent or guardian if under 18 years.
- The context is directly related to participation in our service
- The child or young person is appropriately dressed and posed
- The image is taken in the presence of other personnel.

Images are not to be distributed (including as an attachment to email) to anyone outside RA Tas, other than the child photographed or their parent or guardian, without management knowledge and approval.

Images (digital or hard copy) are to be stored in a manner that prevents unauthorised access by others, for example:

- If in hard-copy form, in a locked drawer or cabinet
- If in electronic form, in a 'password protected' folder.

Images (digital or hard copy) are to be destroyed or deleted as soon as they are no longer required. Images are not exhibited on our website without parental knowledge and approval, or such images must be presented in a manner that de-identifies the child or young person if such identification is potentially detrimental.

Physical contact with children and young people

Any physical contact with children and young people must be appropriate to the delivery of RA Tas services and based on the needs of the child or young person (such as to assist or comfort a distressed young person) rather than to the needs of our staff.

Under no circumstances should any RA Tas staff member have contact with children or young people participating in our services that:

- Involves touching of the genitals, buttocks or of the breast area. That is other than Children's Contact Centre (CCS) staff supporting a small child to change a nappy or toilet, in this instance the parent, guardian or another RA Tas staff member must always be in full view of the staff member performing these tasks.
- Would appear to a reasonable observer to have a sexual connotation
- Is intended to cause pain or distress to the child or young person, for example, corporal punishment.
- Is overly physical, as is for example, wrestling, horseplay, tickling or other roughhousing
- Is unnecessary, as is for example, assisting with toileting when a child does not require assistance.
- Is initiated against the wishes of the child or young person, except if such contact may be necessary to prevent injury to the child or young person or to others in which case:
 - Physical restraint should be a last resort
 - The level of force used must be lawful, appropriate to the specific circumstances, and aimed solely at restraining the child or young person to prevent harm to themselves or others
 - The incident must be reported to management as soon as possible.

RA Tas staff are required to report to their manager any physical contact initiated by a child or young person that is sexual and/or inappropriate, for example, acts of physical aggression, as soon as possible, to enable the situation to be managed in the interests of the safety of the child or young person and RA Tas staff and any other clients.

Change room arrangements

RA Tas prohibits the use of change rooms as part of the services we provide to children and young people.

Overnight stays and sleeping arrangements

RA Tas prohibits overnight stays as part of the service we provide to children and young people.

Identity badge

RA Tas staff should wear an identity badge only while involved in delivering services or as required by our organisation, such as when representing RA Tas at designated functions and to and from work.

Transporting children

RA Tas prohibits staff from providing transport to children and young people as part of our service, unless it is a routine requirement of service delivery and there has been specific prior authorisation from a manager and the child or young person's parent or guardian. To gain approval from RA Tas, our staff are required to complete the *Transporting Clients, Children & Young People form* and submit to their manager for approval, prior to transport occurring.

Reporting obligations

RA Tas staff are prescribed persons (mandatory reporters) and as such are expected to make a report immediately if:

- They become aware of any allegation of child abuse
- They have a concern for the safety of a child or young person in our service
- They notice any staff member whose practice or behaviour is contrary to the expectations of behaviour set out in the *Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct* and *Practice and Behaviour Guidelines*.

Please refer to the Children and Young People Risk Management and Abuse Reporting Policy for detailed guidance for all staff to follow when making a report.

7. Communication

RA Tas communicates our Practice and Behaviour requirements to all staff in our organisation. We involve staff in reviews of our Practice and Behaviour requirements. We communicate any significant alterations to our Practice and Behaviour requirements to all staff.

8. 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.

9. Supporting Resources

Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics
RA Tas Child Risk Assessment Tool
Core Competency – Child Safety
Responding to Reportable Client Matters Policy and Procedures

10. Approval and Endorsement

Approved By:	Michael Kelly (Chief Executive Officer)
Endorsed By:	Board of Relationships Australia Tasmania
Date of Endorsement:	29/11/2022
Review Date:	29/11/2023

