



CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENTS POLICY



POLICY RATIONALE

This policy provides a set of clear guidelines to strengthen safety for all children attending our services. The policy has taken into account the National Principles for Child Safe Standards and each individual State Child Safe Standards if applicable, in relation to supporting efforts to drive cultural change to protect children from abuse.

This policy provides standards for:

- Creating safe environments in which children can participate in all aspects of programs and experiences in safety and comfort.
- Ensuring all staff members have adequate knowledge of risk identification, safety and emergency procedures for supervision and advocacy of children in our care.
- Ensuring all staff understand and comply with policies and procedures for reporting concerns of child safety as per legislation and regulations.

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

TeamKids has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that all children in our care are safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, families, staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and to provide safe environments for children with disabilities. TeamKids has committed to be a child-safe organisation.

In actioning this commitment, TeamKids have established robust policies designed for the safety of children. TeamKids regularly review and update these policies and accompanying procedures and staff training.

In line with our stance against child abuse, TeamKids will treat all child abuse, allegations and/or child safety breach seriously. TeamKids staff and volunteers are aware of our expectations and consequences as outlined in our policies, procedures, induction and training programs.

TeamKids supports the National Principles for a Child Safe Organisation and each States individual Child Safe Standards if applicable, promoting these with staff, educators, families and children, through the induction and ongoing training processes.

Currently, the ACT and NSW have a partially regulated child safe standards system, while Victoria, Queensland and South Australia have mandatory requirements.

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The National Principles for a Child Safe Organisation (including Queensland & South Australia) are:

Principle 1: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.

Principle 2: Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

Principle 3: Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

Principle 4: Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

Principle 5: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

Principle 6: Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.

Principle 7: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

Principle 8: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

Principle 9: Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.

Principle 10: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

The Victorian Child Safe Standards were updated to 11 standards on 1 July 2022 and are:

Standard 1: Establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children are respected and valued.

Standard 2: Ensure that child safety and wellbeing are embedded in service leadership, governance and culture.

Standard 3: Children are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

Standard 4: Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

Standard 5: Equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice.

Standard 6: People working with children are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

Standard 7: Ensure that processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.

Standard 8: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through ongoing education and training.

Standard 9: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children to be harmed.

Standard 10: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.

Standard 11: Policies and procedures that document how services are safe for children.

OUR CHILDREN

This policy empowers children who are vital and active participants in our organisation. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance in our organisation and welcome people from all walks of life and cultural background.

In particular we:

Promote cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Promote cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from CALD backgrounds.

Ensure that children with disabilities are safe and can participate equally.

OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

This policy informs our staff and volunteers of TeamKids expectations in interacting and caring for children.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct specifies the expected standards all TeamKids staff and volunteers must adhere to when working with children. All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Code of Conduct.

All TeamKids educators wear an easy to recognise TeamKids uniform so all children can quickly and confidentially identify staff.

VISITORS TO THE SERVICE

Any visitors to the service will always be supervised by an educator of the service. Each visitor will be required to identify themselves and the reason for their presence at the service. If educators feel that their presence is not appropriate, they can:

1. Ask the visitor to leave immediately.
2. If an unauthorised visitor refuses to leave the service when asked, the Police will be contacted for support to remove the unauthorised person. In such as case, children will be moved to a safe place to wait for Police support, or a lockdown procedure will be enacted, whichever action is deemed by the person in day-to-day charge to be more effective in protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of children and educators.
3. TeamKids management will be notified immediately of this type of incident.

PHYSICAL AND ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS MINIMISING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR ABUSE AND OTHER KINDS OF HARM TO OCCUR

TeamKids encourages a 'screen free' environment where possible. Children are not permitted to bring electronic devices to the service, unless it is for agreed upon scenarios, such as homework. This would be directly supervised at all times, with children informed of this at the commencement of agreed upon practices to ensure shared understanding. TeamKids iPads and laptops are not suitable for use by children, unless directly supervised by an educator at all times, in particular whilst the internet is in use, to ensure only appropriate content for children of primary school age, is viewed/accessed.

The physical environment is set to allow for appropriate supervision at all times, where educators can 'see, hear and intervene' at any time. Where children require privacy, process are in place, to ensure supervision procedures can still be in place.

Risks such as risk to physical health, are managed through a daily checklist of the physical environment and where equipment or resources requirement replacement or repair, this is managed in partnership with the school/venue in which the service is located.

These elements are all assessed with a lens to the age/stage of development of the children attending the service and the aim of extending children's learning and development opportunities, in a risk managed manner, given that removing all risk is not necessarily possible or beneficial for children's development.

Physical environments are discussed in 'My Venue Rules' guidance documents.

TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

TeamKids has a deep commitment to staff and volunteer training. We acknowledge training and education is a critical component to ensuring all staff and volunteers understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

The TeamKids culture encourages all staff, volunteers, parents, carers and most of all, children to feel confident and comfortable to discuss any allegations of child abuse and/or child safety concerns. TeamKids' staff and volunteer training programs include the identification and appropriate responses, as well as risk mitigation strategies, of child abuse.

TeamKids support staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to:

- Develop skills necessary for the protection of children in our care from abuse
- Promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; promote the cultural safety of children from CALD backgrounds; and the safety and inclusion of children with disabilities.

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New employees and volunteers are supervised to ensure the TeamKids commitment to the message of child safety being **everyone's** responsibility is a lived commitment. Supervision of new staff and volunteers also allows monitoring of behaviours towards children and ongoing learning to increase safety and appropriate interactions (please refer to TeamKids Code of Conduct).

TeamKids commitment means that any behaviour threatening the safety of children will be reported through appropriate channels, including the relevant authority for the state in which the service is located and the Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

RECRUITMENT

TeamKids exercises all reasonable precautions in employing skilled professionals to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertise roles in a manner demonstrating our commitment to child safety and our ethical and legislative responsibilities as an organisation. TeamKids is very clear before and during the recruitment process that our staff and volunteers have ethical as well as legislative obligations to children.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold and provide evidence of a current Working with Children Check, Blue Card/Exemption to the Blue Card, Working With Vulnerable Persons Check, state alternative, or recognised Teaching Registration. TeamKids reserves the right to request a Criminal History Check (Police Check) at any time during the recruitment process or employment period.

TeamKids reference checks all new staff to ensure the recruitment of safe and trustworthy team members. Where a criminal history is revealed during the recruitment process, the applicant will be given an opportunity to provide further context and/or information.

The verification of the required checks or Teaching Registration will be validated by the People and Culture department of TeamKids, on a regular basis, at least annually. For those educators in New South Wales, a formal verification process is mandated before an educator commences work with children.

FAIR PROCEDURES FOR PERSONNEL

The safety and wellbeing of children is TeamKids primary concern. TeamKids acts in a fair and reasonable manner to all staff, educators and personnel. The decisions TeamKids make regarding recruiting, assessment of incidents and/or exercising disciplinary action will always occur via transparent processes and will be based on evidence.

TeamKids records all allegations of abuse and/or safety concerns via incident reporting forms. This includes investigation updates and information on necessary authorities and/or bodies. All records are securely and confidentially stored.

Where allegation/s of abuse and/or safety concern/s are raised, TeamKids provides information and updates to families and children as appropriate on all progress and any actions TeamKids takes.

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PRIVACY

All personal information considered or recorded, respects and protects the privacy of all individuals, be they staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to a person's safety.

TeamKids have procedures and practices to ensure all personal information is protected and confidentially stored. TeamKids believes that everyone is entitled to know how information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it. TeamKids acts in a transparent and fair manner through all processes.

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

TeamKids prioritises our legal responsibilities and believes these to be of the utmost seriousness.

Further details of these responsibilities can be found in the TeamKids Child Protection Policy and the TeamKids – Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Policy, including those of mandatory reporting for each state.

RISK MANAGEMENT

All organisations are required to protect children where risks are identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general, occupational health and safety risks, TeamKids proactively manages risks of abuse to our children.

TeamKids implement risk management strategies, including the identification, assessment, appropriate response and immediate and ongoing risk mitigation strategies to minimise child abuse and risks.

All risks to children are noted and managed.

These include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock) and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child or family from our programs on social media).

REGULAR REVIEW

This policy is reviewed annually and following significant incidents if they occur. TeamKids ensures that families and children have the opportunity to contribute to policy design through surveys and reflection of feedback provided. TeamKids is an inclusive organisation welcoming local Aboriginal communities, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities and people with a disability.

ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

TeamKids treats all allegations seriously and commits to thorough and swift investigation procedures. TeamKids staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations, as per the TeamKids - Grievance and Complaints Policy.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff, and volunteers are familiar with the procedures of action, including reporting all identified abuse or inappropriate behaviours.

TeamKids adheres to the Reportable Conduct Scheme for each state, where allegations made against educators in relation to child abuse or neglect of any kind.

TeamKids believes everyone has a responsibility to report allegations of abuse where there is a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

TeamKids acknowledges a response is required where:

- A child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may, in fact, be referring to themselves)
- Behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed.
- Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it.
- Observing suspicious behaviour.

PROCEDURES

- Educators actively supervise all children attending TeamKids programs. Educators ensure appropriate positioning both indoors and outdoors to ensure maximum supervision for children in our care. (S 165)
- Educators ensure that all children are made aware of program boundaries and program supervision procedures.
- Educators guide program experiences and implement daily routines to ensure children are supervised, supported and safe.
- TeamKids, National Quality & Compliance Team, assess the suitability of the physical environment before TeamKids commit to any venue.
- Director of Services/Coordinators reassess the environment daily for risk of harm or hazard to children.
- Educators complete a daily OH&S checklist during the program to ensure that hazards, risk and concerns are noted and appropriately addressed. Educators encourage children to be mindful of the program environment and the equipment. Educators assist in maintaining a space that is as safe as possible.
- Regional/Area Manager's conduct a detailed child safe audit for each service.
- Educators ensure that any other person/s visiting or present at the service support the achievement of an environment that is physically and emotionally secure for all children. Any persons not supporting a child-safe environment are asked to leave.
- Educators maintain appropriate educator to child ratios. Person/s visiting the program during operating times are encouraged to make appointments to ensure these ratios are kept.

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- Educators discuss expectations with children and inform them of behavioural expectations, including being responsible, respecting their environment and other children and reporting any concerns they may have.
- Educators are especially vigilant when the environment includes water hazards. Rigorous risk assessments are completed before such activities. All Educators read and abide by said risk assessments.
- Educators provide current Working with Children Checks, Blue Card/Blue Card Exemption, Working With Vulnerable Persons Check, relevant teaching registration and any other relevant qualifications (Asthma, Anaphylaxis, First Aid, CPR) training to ascertain fitness and propriety of educators.
- TeamKids ensures that the nominated supervisor/responsible person/person in day-to-day charge and all staff at the service who work with children are advised of any existing child protection orders.
- All staff are made aware of any court orders related to child protection through our software alert system, there will also be copy of the court order readily available to all staff at relevant venues on children's individual enrolment record.
- TeamKids provides an environment that is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol for all staff and children. All staff and volunteers at each service comply with and uphold the tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol-free environment. Educators will observe the presence of a member of the public smoking or drinking when outside of the approved indoor spaces and, if necessary, will return to a smoke/alcohol-free area or the approved indoor space.
- TeamKids provides a "chill out" or "relaxation and mindfulness area" for children to access at any given time throughout the day. The TeamKids Sleep and Rest Policy will be used to guide sleep and rest for children.

REFERENCES:

ACECQA National Quality Framework Resource Kit (2012)

Quality Area 2 – Children's health and safety

Quality Area 7 – Leadership and Service Management

Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011) R 84

Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010) S 168(2)(h), S 165

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