

WHR Allied Health- Commitment to the safety of Children and young people

WHR Allied Health is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. We will actively implement and ingrain the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

WHR Allied Health has zero tolerance for child abuse.

WHR Allied Health is committed to providing a safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability.

Every person involved in WHR Allied Health has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

In its planning, decision-making and operations WHR Allied Health will:

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child/young person safety;
2. Value and empower children and young people to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children and young people.
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount;
5. Provide written guidance and training in appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
7. Ensure children and young people to know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues;
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities;
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk; and
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers."

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Code of Conduct (Children and Young People)

All workers are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who engage with WHR Allied Health. All workers are expected to act in accordance with this Code of Conduct in their physical and online interactions with children and young people under the age of 18 years.

All workers will:

- Act in accordance with WHR Allied Health's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures at all times.
- Behave respectfully, courteously and ethically towards children and their families and towards other staff.
- Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they communicate (verbally or non-verbally) that they do not feel safe or well.
- Promote the human rights, safety and wellbeing of all children in WHR Allied Health.
- Demonstrate appropriate personal and professional boundaries.
- Consider and respect the diverse backgrounds and needs of children.
- Create an environment that promotes and enables children's participation and is welcoming, culturally safe and inclusive for all children and their families.
- Involve children in making decisions about activities, policies and processes that concern them wherever possible.
- Contribute, where appropriate, to WHR Allied Health's policies, discussions, learning and reviews about child safety and wellbeing.
- Identify and mitigate risks to children's safety and wellbeing as required by WHR Allied Health's risk assessment and management policy or process.
- Respond to any concerns or complaints of child harm or abuse promptly and in line with WHR Allied Health's policy and procedure for receiving and responding to complaints.
- Report all suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse as required by the relevant legislation and by WHR Allied Health's policy and processes on internal and external reporting.
- Comply with WHR Allied Health's protocols on communicating with children.
- Comply with relevant legislation and WHR Allied Health's policies and procedures on record keeping and information sharing.

Workers will not:

- Engage in any unlawful activity with or in relation to a child.
- Engage in any activity that is likely to physically, sexually or emotionally harm a child.
- Unlawfully discriminate against any child or their family members.
- Be alone with a child unnecessarily.
- Arrange personal contact, including online contact, with children I am working with for a purpose unrelated to WHR Allied Health's activities.
- Disclose personal or sensitive information about a child, including images of a child, unless the child and their parent or legal guardian consent or unless I am required to do so by WHR Allied Health's policy and processes on reporting.
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of children or show or provide children with access to inappropriate images or material.
- Work with children while under the influence of alcohol or prohibited drugs.
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse

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Key concepts about the safety of children and young people

- Child Abuse is wrong (morally, socially and legally)
- Child Abuse is never the child's fault.
- The prevention of child abuse is everyone's responsibility.
- Listen to and be aware of your instincts.
- You do not need to have hard evidence of child abuse, you just need to act on your reasonable concerns.
- Offenders can be anyone, even people you know and love.
- It is very rare for children to lie about abuse, they are more likely to be silent, under report or minimise.

Children disclosing

Children might try to tell an adult **using hints or cues**, because they lack the communication skills to tell any other way.

The following hints may not mean anything to an adult **unaware** of the cues:

- Appearing fearful of the babysitter/carer
- Significant behaviour changes before or after contact
- "I don't like the games we play"
- "I saw grandpa's penis when he did a wee in the park"

Protective adults need to listen to children and ask **open ended** questions:

- What happens in the game?
- How do they tease you?
- Show me what happened?
- What do you mean when you say...?
- How did this make you feel... happy/sad/scared?

Responding to a disclosure

When a child discloses, **they** may feel:

- Scared
- Guilty
- Ashamed
- Angry
- Powerless

When a child discloses, **you** may feel:

- Outrage
- Disgust
- Sadness
- Anger
- Disbelief

When a child discloses, it is important to stay calm and in control of your own feelings

Show your **care and concern** for the child by:

- **Listening** carefully to what they are saying; let them use their own words.
- Telling them they did the **right thing by telling you**.
- Telling them it is **not their fault** and that they are not responsible for the abuse.
- Letting the child know **what will happen next**.
- Telling the child **you are pleased** they told you.
- Advising your **line management and/or authorities**.

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Do NOT...

- Make promises you cannot keep, such as promising that you will not tell anyone – **you have to tell someone**
- Push the child into giving details of the abuse. Your role is to listen to what the child wants to tell you - **not to conduct an investigation the authorities will do that for you**
- Indiscriminately discuss the circumstances of the incident with others not directly involved with helping the child – **privacy and confidentiality is important particularly if there is pending criminal investigation**. There may be a criminal case and you need to be mindful that you only need to alert managers/authorities with your concerns/observations **not investigate**

ANY person who believes, on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection may report.

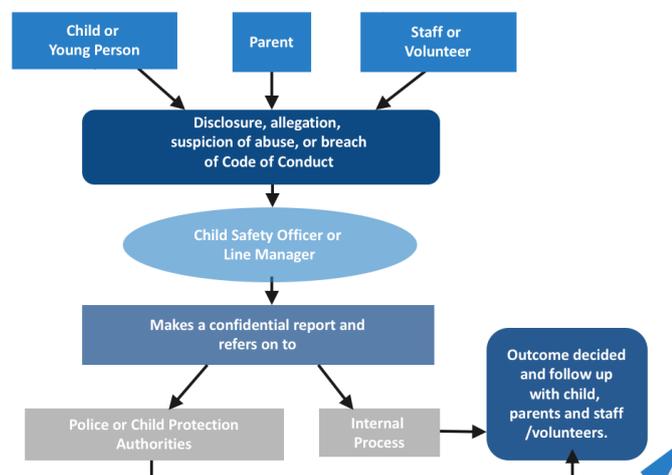
- You do not have to prove that abuse has taken place. You only need reasonable grounds for your belief.
- You do not need permission from parents or caregivers to make a notification; nor do they need to be informed that a notification is being made.
- If you make a notification in good faith, you cannot be held legally liable - regardless of the outcome of the notification.
- Your identity will remain confidential unless you need to give evidence if the matter goes to court.

Important considerations for reporting

- Completion of reporting process (use of incidents within SupportAbility)
- Duty of Care
- Roles and responsibilities
- Recognition of abuse or breach
- Legal considerations
- Response to disclosure
- Confidentiality measures
- External reporting obligations
- Documentation
- Advising all parties of the outcome
- Provide ongoing support to all parties

Reporting procedure

The 'Police or Child Protection Authorities' step will activate the 'Step by step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child First' procedure.



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Elements of an effective reporting procedure

1. **Fair** to all parties and **upholds** natural justice.
2. Thorough and transparent: people can see **how the process works** from beginning to end.
3. **Up-to-date**: all details, names, positions, contact numbers are accurate and completed.
4. Organisational Analysis: **Themes and incidents** to develop strategies to mitigate repeated incidents.
5. Mandatory: WHR staff **must report** concerns of misconduct/ abuse.

Trauma informed response

The Act (Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (as amended 2014)) describes reasonable grounds as matters of which a person becomes aware of any opinions based on those matters:

- A child discloses abuse.
- A child says they know someone who has been abused.
- A friend, relative, acquaintance or sibling of the child says that they have been abused.
- Professional observations of the child's behaviour.
- Signs of physical and sexual abuse.

Reporting child abuse – complaints and incidents

ANY person who believes, on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection may report...

- You **do not have to prove** that abuse has taken place. You only need reasonable grounds for your belief.
- You **do not need permission from parents or caregivers** to make a notification; nor do they need to be informed that a notification is being made.
- If you make a **notification in good faith, you cannot be held legally liable** – regardless of the outcome of the notification.

Reporting of Abuse

It is rare that a child will disclose physical or sexual abuse experience/s:

Children don't tell because they:

- think they are to blame
- are scared of getting into trouble
- are embarrassed, ashamed or confused
- are scared of the perpetrator
- worry about getting the perpetrator into trouble
- don't know that what has happened to them is wrong
- lack communication skills

The perpetrator may tell the child:

- No one will believe you
- Everyone will hate you/blame you
- Your mum will be angry with me
- They'll take you away
- They'll take me away, I'll get into trouble
- It will break the family up
- You won't see each other ever again
- I will go to jail

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If you need to report an offence that requires immediate police attention call 000

WHR Allied Health Workers will follow the relevant 'Reporting Child Abuse' process flow chart. Workers have access to these documents which explain the process for NSW and Victoria. These documents are also made available to any person to access from our website resources page www.whralledhealth.com/resources

Further support options

- **Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800 www.kidshelp.com.au
- **Lifeline:** 13 11 14 www.lifeline.org.au
- **Beyond Blue:** 1300 22 46 36
- **Blue Knot helpline:** 1300 657 380 <https://www.blueknot.org.au/Helpline> (any trauma)
- **Family Helpline:** 08 9223 1100
- **Parenting Line and Parent Help Centre:** 1800 654 432

Sexual assault

- **Sexual Assault and Referral Centre:** 1800 199 888 (free for STD callers) or 08 9340 1828
- **Incest Survivors Association:** 08 9227 8745 www.isa.asn.au
- **Centre Against Sexual Assault:** 9635 3610 (24 hours a day/7 days per week)
 - Geelong - 1800 806 292 <https://www.safvcentre.org.au/>
 - Wodonga - 1800 806 292 <https://centreagainstviolence.org.au/about/>

Domestic Violence

- **Women's Domestic Violence Helpline** 08 9223 1188 or 1800 007 339 (free for STD callers)
- **Men's Domestic Violence Helpline** 08 9223 1199 or 1800 000 5999

Crisis/Housing Services

- **Crisis Care (24 Hours):** 1800 199 008 or 08 9223 1111
- **Women's Refuge Group:** 08 9227 1642

Men's Services

- **Mensline Australia:** 1300 78 99 78 www.menslineaus.org.au