

CHILD SAFE POLICY

1. OUR COMMITMENT

All children and young people have a right to feel safe, and to be safe at all times.

We aim to promote the care and protection of children and to develop mutually respectful relationships between children and SPELD SA employees while ensuring our obligations are met under the Young People (Safety) Act 2017. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuses advises that to achieve a child safe organisation it is critical to have competent and committed leadership and governance which develops and maintains a child safe culture (Interim Report 2014, Volume 1, p 141). For this policy framework to be effective it requires awareness and knowledge at all levels, from Council through to volunteers and members. It requires a commitment to shared personal responsibility to ensure children are protected.

SPELD SA is committed to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations to creating environments where the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is at the centre of our thoughts, values, and actions. In summary, the key features of our child safe environment include:

- We take preventative action, including having a child safe policy and ongoing review.
- We proactively work to raise awareness and implement policies and procedures which improve risk.
- We respond immediately when child safety concerns are raised.
- We empower all, including children, to participate. Ensuring children know who to talk to and that they feel comfortable in discussing that they do not feel safe.
- We foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children.
- We respect diversity in cultures and child rearing principles while keeping child safety paramount.
- We provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children.
- We engage only the most suitable people to work with children and having high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development.
- We report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities including police and other statutory authorities.

2. SCOPE

This policy framework applies to all entities and individuals associated with SPELD SA who engage in child related services or activities. It will be implemented by Council members, staff, volunteers, children, parents, carers, and any other person with responsibility for the care of children.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 Child Safe Environment

3.1.1 SPELD SA will create an environment in which children and young people feel safe, confident and comfortable in reporting to SPELD SA employees any incident or conduct which may cause or lead to the child, or another child, to be at risk of harm or to suffer harm.

3.1.2 All children who are involved in any of SPELD SA's activities or programs have a right to feel and be safe. SPELD SA is committed to provide safe environments where children are care for, respected and nurtured.

We will do all in our power to safeguard children from all forms of abuse.

CHILD SAFE POLICY

- 3.1.3 SPELD SA in accord with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations has created a culture, adopted strategies and taken into action promotion of a child wellbeing and prevention of harm to children.

SPELD SA will responsibly and thoroughly:

- a. Place emphasis on genuine engagement with and valuing children and young people
- b. Create conditions that reduce likelihood of harm to children and young people
- c. Create an environment that increases the likelihood of identifying any harm
- d. Respond to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm or risk of harm to a child.

SPELD SA recognises that each child should benefit from (at least) the following outcomes:

- a. to be safe from harm;
- b. to do well at all levels of learning and to have skills for life;
- c. to enjoy a healthy lifestyle;
- d. to be active citizens who have a voice and influence,

and accordingly commits to promoting the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and outcomes.

- 3.1.4 SPELD SA is committed to ensuring that the safety, welfare and well-being of children are maintained or enhanced at all times during their involvement with our services. We commit to the following to keep children safe:

Promote strong leadership and governance and a culture of child safety

- a. We will not tolerate harm to children
- b. Our leaders are committed to child safety and will model and champion child safe policies, practices and culture.
- c. Our governance arrangements will facilitate the implementation of child safe policies and practices and will set clear accountabilities
- d. Leadership, staff and volunteers accept individual and shared responsibility for child safety, understand their roles and actively work to raise family, organisational and community awareness of child protection issues.

Enable children and families to participate in decision making

- a. All SPELD SA staff with interactions with children will adopt and implement policies and procedures that enable the active participation of children in decisions that affect their lives.
- b. We will involve families and communities in the development and implementation of our agencies' policies and procedures
- c. We recognise that families have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their child and will facilitate their participation in decisions affecting their child, where appropriate.

Provide an open environment

- a. We will communicate openly, honestly and with respect with children and families
- b. We will be open to external feedback and advice and proactively consult with stakeholders
- c. We will be transparent and accountable.
- d. We will keep families and communities informed about organisations child safety approach, operations and governance
- e. We will education staff, volunteers and children to identify signs of harm
- f. We will encourage and support staff, volunteers, families, children or any other person to raise any concerns they have about children's safety through the creation of child-friendly environments. In particular, this means listening to, respecting and believing children who raise concerns.

CHILD SAFE POLICY

Respect diversity and promote equality

- a. We will ensure our organisation promote equality for all children, considering the diversity of their circumstances, including children from Aboriginal and Torrens Strait Islander communities and children from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- b. We will pay particular attention to the needs of vulnerable children, including children with a disability and children who have experienced trauma.

3.2 Code of Conduct

- 3.2.1 SPELD SA adopts, implements and strictly enforces codes of conduct for all adults who interact with children, including setting clear boundaries of behaviour between adults and children.

We will provide guidance to children about expectations of their interactions with other children and be clear about what is unacceptable behaviour.

- 3.2.2 Safeguarding children and young people is the responsibility of all SPELD SA people, including the Governing Council Members, Executives, leaders, staff, contractors, students and volunteers, we will:

- a. Drive a culture of child safety at all levels of the organisation.
- b. Ensure that children are treated with equality, understanding, and respect.
- c. Empower children and young people to participate in decisions which affect their lives.
- d. Value diversity and promote inclusive practices
- e. Create an environment in which children feel safe and confident.
- f. Always behave and communicate with children respectfully.
- g. Act with decency in dealing with children and their families.
- h. Ensure all allegations or reasonable suspicions of harm or risk of harm to a child are recorded and reported.
- i. Raise any concerns, issues or problems related to the harm or potential harm to a child or young person with a line manager and the Child Abuse Report Line 13 14 78 as soon as possible.

- 3.2.3 SPELD SA employees will not:

- a. Perpetrate, allow or tolerate bullying or harassment of a child or young person.
- b. Engage in rough physical play with children or young people.
- c. Touch or hold a child or young person in a way that is unwarranted or unwanted
- d. Neither take or encourage a child or young person to an employee's home under any circumstances nor go to a child or young person's home without documented approval.
- e. Provide any personal contact details to a child or young person.

CHILD SAFE POLICY

- f. Behave or communicate in a way that could be interpreted as being sexually suggestive even as a joke, nor allow a child or young person to communicate or behave in such a way. The child or young person must be immediately told that their behaviour or comment is unacceptable and inappropriate.

3.3 Adopt Clear Evidence-Based Policies and Procedures

- 3.3.1 SPELD SA will have a child safe policy and procedures in place in compliance with legislation. This will include policies and procedure relating to:
 - a. Staff and volunteer training and awareness raising
 - b. Regular risk assessment and comprehensive plans for risk mitigation using evidence based best practice
 - c. Reporting and complaints handling, including roles and responsibilities
 - d. Recruitment and screening of employees and volunteers
 - e. Records Management
- 3.3.2 SPELD SA will ensure we perform risk assessments that will include the physical and online environments. We will ensure that our online environments are used in accordance with our codes of conduct and policies and procedures.
- 3.3.3 SPELD SA will have an accessible, responsive and fair complaints and complaints process in place.
- 3.3.4 SPELD SA will ensure our Child safe policies and information is clear, easily understood and accessible.
- 3.3.5 SPELD SA will ensure our people management practices, including volunteer management practices, have a clear child safety focus.

3.4 Hire the Right People

- 3.4.1 We have adopted and implemented evidence-based practice standards, including values based recruitment where appropriate in the recruitment and screening of employees and the engagement of volunteers and others who work with children.

As a requirement of employment or volunteering with SPELD SA our recruitment practices include conducting referee checks and working with children checks for all employees and volunteers.

- 3.4.2 We will conduct national criminal history checks for all staff working or interacting with children through the relevant police service. International police checks will also be requested where practicable.
- 3.4.3 We will include a statement of our commitment to child safety in all our child-related employment advertisements and position descriptions.
- 3.4.4 We will communicate to prospective staff and volunteers our values, policies, procedures and expectations, including around child safety, and ensure that they display a commitment to the values, policies and practices of SPELD SA.

3.5 Undertake Strong Development and Supervision

- 3.5.1 We will take the appropriate disciplinary action where staff or volunteers do not adhere to the organisation's policies and procedures.

CHILD SAFE POLICY

3.5.2 Employees should report suspected breaches of this Policy in first instance to their Line Manager.

3.5.3 We will provide strong and consistent supervision of staff and volunteers.

3.5.4 We will screen staff and volunteers who work with children as an ongoing process through continual oversight and maintenance of current working with children checks, national criminal history records and regular performance evaluation.

3.6 Provide Child Safe Focused Orientation and Training

3.6.1 To ensure we maintain a child safe culture our leaders, staff, and volunteers will be informed, resourced and supported to understand their role in providing a safe environment for children.

3.6.2 SPELD SA will provide an appropriate best practice induction and ongoing training for staff, volunteers and others engaged in the care of children to:

- a. Understand child safe policies and procedures
- b. Identify signs of harm including child maltreatment, sexual abuse and grooming.
- c. Raise awareness of child sexual abuse, grooming and mandatory reporting.
- d. Raise awareness of appropriate/inappropriate behaviour.
- e. Understand the requirements and process for mandatory reporting and handling complaints and/or allegations.
- f. Ensure understanding of the requirements of a child safe environment.
- g. Develop practical skills in protecting children and responding to disclosures.

3.7 Provide Support

3.7.1 SPELD SA will facilitate child friendly means for children to communicate concerns.

3.7.2 We will support those who raise concerns about the safety of children.

3.7.3 Where appropriate, we will educate children to identify risks of abuse and signs of harm including grooming or sexual abuse.

3.8 Comprehensive Investigation and Reporting

3.8.1 We will have clear, best practice and legislatively compliant process for responding to those who have been harmed or potentially harmed

3.8.2 Our complaints handling policies and processes will be child focused, accessible, responsive and fair.

3.8.3 Where a complaint of abuse of a child becomes known it will be immediately reported to the authorities, including police and other statutory authorities, and we will immediately take the appropriate steps to assess and minimise any further risk or harm.

3.8.4 SPELD SA mandates any person who is aware of or suspects child abuse or harm to make a report to the authorities, including police and other statutory authorities.

3.8.5 SPELD SA will support relevant authorities' investigations into any concerns about children and/or allegations of abuse or harm towards children.

CHILD SAFE POLICY

- 3.8.6 While investigations are being conducted we will ensure child protection measures continue to be in place. In consultation with police and other authorities, and subject to their approval, we will conduct our own inquiries in order to identify opportunities for child safe practice improvements.

3.9 Communication of Policy

- 3.9.1 SPELD SA staff, volunteers, members, families and children can access the Child Safe Policy on our website speldsa.org.au
- 3.9.2 SPELD SA mandated reporters are recorded in our human resources file and is updated when changes to staff occur. Information on who are mandated reporters is available to all staff in the SPELD SA Contact List.

4. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this document, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

A **Child or Young person** is defined as being a person less than 18 years of age.

Harm will be taken to be a reference to physical harm or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission) and, without limiting the generality of this definition, includes such harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect

A child or young person will be taken to be at **risk of harm** if-

- (a) the child or young person has suffered harm (being harm of a kind against which a child or young person is ordinarily protected); or
- (b) there is a likelihood that the child or young person will suffer harm (being harm of a kind against which a child or young person is ordinarily protected).

Prescribed position is “child-related work” which includes with or caring for children where the work generally involves regular and direct contact with a child or working in close proximity to children on a regular basis in any of the occupational fields or positions when the usual functions of the employment includes this work.

5. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS / REFERENCES

In support of this policy, the following documents apply:

Code of Conduct
 Privacy Policy
 Code of Conduct and Behaviour Procedure
 Risk Management Policy
 Risk Management Framework and Plan
 Employee Handbook
 Recruitment and Induction Procedure
 Disciplinary Action Procedure
 Child Protection a Fresh Start; Government of South Australia’s response to the Child Protection Systems
 Royal Commission report, November 2016

CHILD SAFE POLICY

Children and Young People (Safety) Act, 2017
 The Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care
 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
 National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009 to 2020

6. APPLICABILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, RISK ASSESSMENT AND PROPERTIES

This policy applies to all SPELD SA permanent, fixed term and casual employees, volunteers, agents, contractors or subcontractors working in a position prescribed by the relevant legislation.

Organisational compliance with this policy will be determined through executive review.

Opportunities for Improvement in relation to this policy or its implementation may be registered via our contact us page on our website speldsa.org.au/contact

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