

GROUP	All staff
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Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Description

Autism Partnership is committed to creating and maintaining an environment in which all children are safe from harm. Autism Partnership has a zero tolerance of child abuse. This policy focuses on how we can build and maintain an environment which is safe, supportive, welcoming and inclusive for all of our children; that the learning environment that we create is transparent and promotes their participation.

Our commitment to Child Safety

Autism Partnership is dedicated to doing what is best for children and young people. We are committed to providing our children and young people with a safe environment where their rights, needs and interests are met. We have zero tolerance for child abuse and other harm. We know that policies and procedures alone are not enough to keep children safe and well. We work to create a culture, adopt strategies and take action to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people.

Autism Partnership regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance, and is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations, along with the maintenance of a child-safe culture.

As a team, we have a responsibility to understand the important and specific role we play, individually and collectively, to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children is at the forefront of every decision that we make.

Scope

All Autism Partnership employees and volunteers have a duty to comply with Autism Partnership policy with respect to Child Safety and Wellbeing.

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Responsibilities

Autism Partnership recognises that it has a moral and legal duty to protect its students from foreseeable harm. This includes the provision of safeguards against mistreatment and timely reporting of child abuse. Preventative measures include the -

- careful selection of staff
- initial and ongoing staff training

Autism Partnership is committed to promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as well as children from a culturally, racially and/or linguistically diverse background. We aim to protect children who are vulnerable, including LGBTIQ+ children and strive to provide a safe environment for children with a disability.

This policy assists Autism Partnership to:

- embed an organisational culture of child safety
- meet its moral and legal duties to its students
- fulfil its statutory responsibilities to protect its students
- fulfill its statutory responsibilities to report child abuse

All staff have a duty of care to protect children from harm and a responsibility to comply with Autism Partnership's child safe standards policies and procedures.

The Clinical Director of each state is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme. This includes ensuring investigations and reporting processes are followed as required by the scheme.

- [NSW](#)
- [QLD](#)
- [VIC](#)

State Clinical Directors are required to update the Autism Partnership Directors where any child safety notifications have been made.

Guiding Principles

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To guide the implementation of this policy Autism Partnership refers to the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) which are now underpinned by the Child Safe Standards of each Australian state ([NSW/QLD/VIC](#)). Autism Partnership’s national commitment to Child Safety will include the [additional standard adopted by Victoria](#)*.

Autism Partnership has a zero tolerance of child abuse and all adult members of the Autism Partnership community have a legal responsibility to report child abuse.

The Child Safe Standards aim to protect children in our care from abuse, create and maintain a culture of child protection within the service and its community and are detailed below.

Child Safe Standard *1 – Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued

Child Safe Standard 1 – Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

Child Safe Standard 2 – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

Child Safe Standard 3 – Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing

Child Safe Standard 4 – Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice

Child Safe Standard 5 – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice

Child Safe Standard 6 – Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused

Child Safe Standard 7 – Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training

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Child Safe Standard 8 – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

Child Safe Standard 9 – Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

Child Safe Standard 10 – Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

Procedures

Staff Recruitment:

All applicants applying for positions with Autism Partnership are informed of Autism Partnership’s Child Safety and Wellbeing policies and procedures, Child Safe Behaviour Standards and Code of Conduct and zero tolerance of child abuse. Autism Partnership uses a combination of pre-employment screening processes to filter out inappropriate job applicants:

- Checks are carried out to verify the applicant’s suitability to child related work
- Job applicants participate in a rigorous recruitment process including behavioural based interviews and practical skill based assessments
- All employees and volunteers must have a current Working With Children Check

Induction and Training:

New staff undergo an induction which includes and emphasises the duty of care, child protection, and the statutory duty to report child abuse.

All staff will participate in training modules designed to build skills to prevent and report child abuse. Autism Partnership is committed to ensuring that all staff receive this training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety and to support their engagement with children.

Autism Partnership ensures that appropriate supervision and support arrangements are in place in relation to the induction of new staff into the policies, codes, practices and procedures governing child safety and wellbeing and child-connected work. We have procedures and processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks.

Visitors to Autism Partnership Centre Based Services:

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All visitors must be accompanied by an Autism Partnership staff member when accessing centre based services. If the visitor is without a WWCC they are directly supervised by an Autism Partnership staff member who holds a current WWCC card.

E-Safety:

Autism Partnership has in place policies and guidelines to support and encourage safe online behaviour. These include Acceptable Use policies for staff.

Risk Management:

Autism Partnership has clear strategies, including policies and procedures to

- ensure the provision of a safe learning environment for its students
- identify risks of child abuse and to mitigate those risks
- safeguard the child and
- report suspected child abuse to the appropriate authorities.

Reporting Child Abuse & Child Safety Concerns:

All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child. All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly. Autism Partnership has a complaints handling process for families and staff and we encourage staff and families to advocate for children.

- Families: [Families - Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure](#)
- Staff:
 - [Child Safeguarding, Protection and Mandatory Reporting Policy](#)
 - [Staff - Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure](#)

All clinical staff understand their mandatory reporting obligations, are aware of their responsibility to protect the child and young people and to report child abuse.

All adult members of the Autism Partnership community have a legal obligation to inform the police if they form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16. If you believe that a child is at immediate risk, phone 000.

Child Empowerment:

Goals that empower children will be prioritised within the curriculum for every child accessing services at Autism Partnership. Autism Partnership clinical teams will encourage and listen to the opinions of children and use such opinions to develop child protection policies and programs.

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Information Sharing:

Autism Partnership may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children. Autism Partnership will keep information about complaints confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety. Autism Partnership may also need to share information about incidents or complaints with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise safety.

Record Keeping:

Autism Partnership is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns.

All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses will be recorded and stored via the Autism Partnership [Incident Reporting procedure](#) and the [Child Safeguarding, Protection & Mandatory Reporting Policy](#). Records which may assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern will be identified and kept as part of an investigation. Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint. Autism Partnership will record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.

Communication

Autism Partnership will make regular and public statements to demonstrate its commitment to child safety and to raise an awareness of the Autism Partnership community's collective responsibility to ensure that all children are safe from harm.

This policy and relevant policy implementation documents will be made publicly available on Autism Partnership's website.

Autism Partnership will put in place arrangements to ensure that the community (including applicants for jobs) is informed about child safe standards policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities.

Review

Autism Partnership will review all child safe related policies annually. Findings from reviews will inform our approach to the continuous improvement of our child safety practices.

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Relevant Legislation & Regulations

[National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#)

Policy Implementation Documents

- [Staff - Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure](#)
- [Child Safeguarding, Protection and Mandatory Reporting Policy](#)
- [Child Safety Reporting Process - Flowchart](#)

Document Information

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