THE SPARK
THERAPY SERVICES
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Child Safe Environment Policy

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The protection of children, one of the most vulnerable groups in society, is a shared community responsibility and involves ensuring that all children are safe, their needs are met and the possibility of child abuse is minimised. Adult supervision is a key factor in creating and maintaining child safe environments. The Spark Therapy Services is committed to providing a service that considers Child Safe Standards.

We will comply with the seven Child Safe Standards below:

- Embedding a culture of child safety through effective leadership.
- Making a commitment to child safety with a policy or statement.
- Having a clear code of conduct that establishes appropriate behaviour with children.
- Screening, supervision and training for staff, to reduce the risk of child abuse.
- Clear processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.
- Identifying child abuse risks and ways to reduce them.
- Empowering children to share their feedback and experiences about feeling safe.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to outline the Child Safe Procedures at The Spark Therapy Services.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Director has a moral, ethical and legal responsibility to ensure that all children are safe in their care, and will provide resources, information and guidance to all staff to support this.

The Director is committed to:

- ensuring that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the practice is protected at all times
- protecting children from any reasonable, foreseeable risk of injury or harm

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- supporting the rights of all children to feel safe, and be safe, at all times
- Preventing child abuse
- Ensuring effective processes are in place to respond to and report allegations of child abuse
- Encourage children to 'have a say', especially on issues that are important to them or about decisions that affect their lives.
- all staff read, understand and implement this policy.

Our staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our organisation.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct and this policy which specifies the standards of conduct required 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 and child safe policy.

4. PROCEDURE

Our commitment to child safety

- Our organisation is committed to child safety.
- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- Our organisation is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

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- Our organisation has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- Our organisations is committed to educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

If we believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone – a mandatory report will be completed or emergency services will be contacted.

Our children

This policy is intended to empower 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 people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in our organisation understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our organisational culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

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New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our organisation's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our organisation understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and worker screening. The Worker Screening Policy applies to all new staff to ensure thorough safety screening of all new staff and contractors.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our Child Safe Incident Report form, records are securely stored. The Reportable Incident Policy and Procedure also applies, which outlines the NDIS Reportable Incident process and includes links to the NDIS Reportable Incident forms.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to children and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to

someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

Our organisation takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.[1]
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.[2]
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.[3]

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors

[1] A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>.

[2] Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>.

[3] Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about how to make a report to child protection < http://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-report-child-protectiont>.

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that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

If an adult has a **reasonable belief** that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- 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[4]
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Staff will talk to their supervisor or the principal OT if they have concerns for the child's safety and report incidents to child protection. See link below for details about how to make a child protection report.

https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-report-child-protection

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Responsibilities of OT and OTAs

1. Ensure that children are adequately supervised and their parents are in attendance during home and clinic visits.
2. Ensure the physical environment is safe, secure and free from hazards for children Ensure all equipment and materials used meet relevant safety standards
3. Ensure the practice maintains a clean environment daily, and tripping/slipping hazards are removed as soon as these become apparent
4. Any dangerous substances such as cleaning products and chemicals will be stored safely Keep up to date and comply with any changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy
5. Provide a copy of their current Working with Children Check (WWC) and Worker Screening documents to their manager. Staff must carry their WWC with them when working.
6. Staff will talk to their supervisor or the principal OT if they have concerns for a child's safety and report incidents to child protection. Record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form.
7. Mandatory report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

Disclosure of Behaviour of concern

If a family or child report an incident of concern such as self-harm, being smacked or suicidal ideation, the treating therapist should discuss this with the parent and seek supervision regarding next steps and management. Referral to external agencies such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services may be considered, in discussion with the family. A collaborative action plan should be made with the family.

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If concerns are raised regarding behaviour management at home, a joint parent session should be offered to support, and problem solve positive behaviour management strategies.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on this procedure, contact Tina Bruce Director The Spark Therapy Services tina@thesparkts.com.au 0431273352

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