



# Child Safe 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 11 Child Safe Standards (July 2022) below:**

Standard Number	Standard	How we meet this 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Child Safe Policy</li><li>- Cultural Diversity Policy</li><li>- Staff supervision and training</li><li>- The Spark documentation: Parent questionnaires, Service Agreements, Service Plans</li><li>- Coaching Approach – working in partnership with child's family.</li></ul>
2	Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Supporting children to find and nurture their spark is a core value at The Spark. Supporting the health and wellbeing of the children we support is a focus of our work.</li><li>- Working in collaboration with the child, their family, and the wider team to support this.</li><li>- Child Safe Policy, Risk Management policy and procedures and Reportable Incident Policies are in place.</li></ul>
3	Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Coaching model in place to support children to be active participants in their therapeutic experience.</li></ul>

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	affecting them and are taken seriously.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child and parent feedback and reflection is embedded into practice, to tailor services to their needs.</li> <li>- Building child and parent capacity and encouraging self-advocacy is a focus of the work we do.</li> <li>- Creating safety in therapeutic experience and relationships is a focus.</li> <li>- Service Agreements and Service Plans developed in partnership with child and family are in place.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coaching model in place - From the outset of service, families are informed that OT goal is to work in partnership with them.</li> <li>- Parent education is integrated into service delivery – to support parents to embed practices that support child safety and wellbeing into their everyday life.</li> <li>- Email feedback sent following each OT session and shared with team, with family’s consent – to support generalisation of strategies into the child’s everyday life.</li> <li>- Working in partnership with the child’s team is promoted through team meetings, school visits and liaison with health professionals.</li> <li>- The Spark Website provides educational resources, capacity building supports and links to Disability Advocacy.</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cultural Diversity Policy.</li> <li>- Bullying and Discrimination Policy and Procedure.</li> <li>- Prevention of Abuse, Neglect and Discrimination Policy</li> <li>- Neuro-affirming therapeutic services, groups and community education in place.</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child Safe Policy</li> <li>- Supervision Policy - Team supervision</li> <li>- CPD Policy – team training in place</li> <li>- Self-Reg and Interpersonal Neuro-biology framework in place to guide assessment and treatment planning.</li> <li>- Performance Review and Planning Policy</li> <li>- Performance Improvement Policy.</li> </ul>

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<b>7</b>	Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coaching model in place – feedback encouraged throughout service delivery.</li> <li>- Complaints and Feedback Policy</li> <li>- Feedback form on website</li> <li>- Feedback request link on email footer</li> </ul>
<b>8</b>	Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child Safe Policy</li> <li>- Ongoing team supervision and training</li> <li>- Code of Conduct</li> </ul>
<b>9</b>	Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child Safe Policy</li> <li>- Site Assessment</li> <li>- Risk Register</li> <li>- Role Risk Assessment</li> <li>- Child Risk Assessment</li> <li>- Activity and Service Delivery Risk Assessment</li> </ul>
<b>10</b>	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ongoing</li> </ul>
<b>11</b>	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In place</li> <li>- NDIS Registered Provider compliant with the NDIS Practice standards and Quality Indicators. These are consistent with the Child Safe Standards.</li> </ul>

## 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

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- protecting children from any reasonable, foreseeable risk of injury or harm
- 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, health and wellbeing**

- Our organisation is committed to child safety, health and wellbeing.
- 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.

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- Our organisation is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.
- Our organisation has robust human resources and recruitment practices and worker screening in place 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.
- We advocate for children and their families and aim to build their capacity.
- The Spark is an approved provider under the NDIS practice standards and quality indicators, which align with the Child Safe Standards.

**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.
- We encourage children to be active and contributing participants of their intervention

## **Training and supervision**

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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.

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 NDIS Worker Screening checks for risk assessed roles to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. 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.

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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.
- **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.<sup>1</sup>
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

## 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

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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 year 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<sup>2</sup>
- 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>

### Responsibilities of OT and OTAs

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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 NDIS 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.

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.

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## 5. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on this procedure, contact Tina Bruce Director The Spark Therapy Services [tina@thesparkts.com.au](mailto:tina@thesparkts.com.au) 0431273352

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