

Child protection in education and early childhood services policy

This is a mandated policy under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this page must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting policy documents](#) page.

Overview

This policy describes the scope of obligations that must be met to maintain child safe environments in department schools, early childhood education and care services, including through the provision of child protection curriculum.

This policy describes the roles and responsibilities of education and care staff and volunteers in establishing and maintaining child safe environments, including through the provision of child protection curriculum.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers working in the department's schools and early childhood education and care services as well as departmental education and care leaders and corporate leaders.

Detail

Principles

- Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is a fundamental responsibility that cannot be compromised by other considerations.
- Children and young people have a right to:
 - be treated with respect and to be protected from harm
 - be asked to express their views and wishes about matters affecting their lives and to have those views appropriately considered by adults
 - feel and be safe in their interactions with adults and other children and young people
 - understand, as early as possible, what is meant by 'feeling and being safe'
 - the support of school based counsellors or designated staff in their education or care environment whose role includes being an advocate for their safety and wellbeing.
- Children and young people are entitled to the rights above irrespective of their special needs, gender, race, sexual orientation or cultural, religious or family circumstances.
- Preventing and intervening in the abuse and neglect of children and young people are moral and legal obligations. They contribute to improving safety and health of current and future generations.
- Safety and wellbeing concerns arise within family, community and institutional settings. The actions and efforts of people from within and outside the education and care setting are needed so that interventions on behalf of children and young people are successful and sustained.
- Maintaining children and young people's attendance at, and engagement with education and care environments is a key contributor to their long-term health, safety and wellbeing.

Obligations

The department must meet each of the following 5 obligations to maintain child safe environments.

Screening and suitability

Staff, volunteers and other persons identified by legislation or department policy will be screened as part of an ongoing process to ensure adults are suitable to work, access or volunteer in the department's education or early childhood services.

Suitability must be established at point of recruitment and monitored continuously.

Continuous monitoring of suitability includes the responsibility of all adults to report inappropriate conduct towards children and young people by any person engaged with the education and early childhood service.

Training and support

Staff and volunteers will receive training that explains their responsibilities for children's safety and wellbeing and outlines how those responsibilities should be met with sensitivity and purpose. The training will cover the obligations underpinning a child safe environment and will include the role of a mandated notifier under Sections 30 and 31 of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*.

- Staff will undertake and follow the approved full day child protection training program as a condition of employment and receive approved 3 yearly update programs thereafter.
- Volunteers will receive the approved child protection induction session as a condition of volunteering.
- Student wellbeing leaders or staff designated to provide advocacy for children and young people's safety and wellbeing will meet relevant department job and person specifications and will receive approved induction, ongoing professional development and support.
- Personnel with responsibility to investigate serious allegations against staff or volunteers in education or early childhood services will:
 - meet department job and person specifications
 - receive induction
 - have support and supervision appropriate to the critical nature of their work.

Adult conduct

Staff and volunteers will relate respectfully and protectively with children and young people. Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report and intervene against behaviours that compromise the safety or wellbeing of children and young people.

- Staff and volunteers will follow approved protective practice guidelines about inappropriate adult conduct towards interactions with children and young people.
- Staff and volunteers will report and document concerns raised about inappropriate adult conduct towards children and young people.
- Staff will follow approved attendance, behaviour management and incident response policies and guidelines.
- Serious allegations of sexual misconduct against staff or volunteers will be referred to the department's Incident Management division (in liaison with SA Police) and decisions about the placement of the individual facing an allegation will be made with the best interests of children as the paramount consideration.

Access to curriculum

Children and young people will engage with curriculum which explicitly teaches them about the nature of personal safety and wellbeing, their rights to personal safety and wellbeing, help seeking and self-protecting behaviours and their responsibility to the safety and wellbeing of others. This policy utilises Section 82 of the *Education Act 1972* which gives the director general the right to determine curriculum in government schools.

- All children and young people in the department's preschools and schools will access approved child protection curriculum each year.
- The approved child protection curriculum will be taught by staff that have received training in its use.
- The approved child protection curriculum will be reviewed in response to emerging evidence about child abuse and violence prevention programs.

Communication, collaboration and record keeping

Issues affecting children and young people's safety and wellbeing are often complex. Successful interventions require carefully coordinated and communicated actions. Staff and volunteers will meet the following commitments, as required by their role:

- At enrolment parents or carers will be made aware of the education or early childhood service's unqualified commitment to children's safety, the fact that some matters must be reported irrespective of parents' wishes and the use of the SA information sharing guidelines in preventing harm to children and young people.
- Parents and carers will be appropriately informed about allegations of sexual misconduct in keeping with the guidance of the 2013 report of the Independent Education Inquiry Royal Commission. All available sources of support within the department and from other agencies and organisations will be considered and sought when the needs of vulnerable children and young people are first identified.
- Education and care staff will actively support interagency efforts to improve family and community safety.
- The department's leaders will be alerted when existing collaborations and available services are unable to properly protect children's safety and wellbeing.
- The department, state and national requirements for record keeping will be followed at all times and for all circumstances.

Roles and responsibilities

Education and early childhood service leaders

Education and early childhood service leaders must ensure:

- screening of adults working or volunteering at the education or early childhood service complies with the department's approved screening policy
- volunteers receive approved child protection induction which is recorded at the education or early childhood service
- 3-yearly approved staff child protection training is recorded on the HR system
- concerns raised about staff or volunteer conduct are responded to in accordance with approved protective practice guidelines
- children and young people in preschools and schools access the approved child protection curriculum each year
- emerging staff performance concerns are responded to proactively
- staff follow all record keeping requirements
- counsellors and staff in designated advocacy positions can fulfil their roles and access required training, counselling and advocacy networks
- conduct and practice at the education or early childhood service is monitored to ensure it meets the obligations outlined in this policy
- provide ongoing monitoring of their compliance with this policy and will, when required by the department, provide reports on elements of that compliance.

Staff

Staff must:

- act in accordance with the obligations outlined in this policy
- raise concerns when barriers or threats to the protection of children and young people's safety and wellbeing are identified, including through the conduct of other adults at the education or early childhood service.

Volunteers

Volunteers must:

- act in accordance with the obligations outlined in this policy and the approved child protection induction for volunteers
- raise concerns when barriers or threats to the protection of children and young people's safety and wellbeing are identified, including through the conduct of other adults at the education or early childhood service.

Education and early childhood leaders

Education and early childhood leaders must:

- ensure emergency response plans enable support services personnel to assist education or early childhood services in managing serious critical incidents
- enable support services personnel to fulfil their roles in assisting children and young people identified by education or early childhood services as needing additional support
- enable support services personnel to contribute to interagency efforts to improve family and community safety and wellbeing
- provide support to education or early childhood service leaders experiencing difficulties in maintaining child safe environments
- address performance issues with education or early childhood service leaders as they relate to meeting the requirements of this policy
- raise concerns through corporate leaders when barriers to protecting children’s safety and wellbeing are identified
- monitor reports provided by education or early childhood service leaders and support sites and services to address gaps in compliance and advise corporate leaders as required.

Corporate leaders

Corporate leaders must ensure:

- designated positions are maintained within the department to oversee the implementation of this policy’s requirements and to monitor and manage all associated risks
- approved staff child protection training programs are updated on a 3-yearly basis and provided across the workforce within a 12-month period
- the department’s investigative responses to serious allegations against staff or volunteers are managed through the Incident Management division and are conducted with the interests of children as the paramount consideration
- screening and suitability processes are maintained to meet policy or legislated requirements
- risks to the department regarding its compliance with this policy are identified and addressed
- issues identified as impediments to the protection of children’s safety and wellbeing are responded to and raised at Chief Executive or ministerial forums as appropriate
- child safety collaboration with the non-government school sectors, the Teacher’s Registration Board, relevant regulating bodies and other government agencies and organisations is maintained
- whole of system reviews of serious critical incidents occur and subsequent recommendations are implemented
- designated positions maintain oversight of the policy’s relevance and its alignment with legislation and national standards and will amend the policy as appropriate.

Definitions

approved

The current version of a department training program, curriculum, policy or set of guidelines.

children and young people

Children from birth to 18 but includes young adults over the age of 18 with development disabilities enrolled at a department education or early childhood service.

education and early childhood leaders

Individuals who supervise or line manage education or early childhood service leaders.

education and early childhood service leader

The individual who has ultimate responsibility for children and young people's welfare in that education and early childhood service; for example, the principal, the director, a manager or family day care educator supported by their coordinator.

education and early childhood service

Preschools and schools, children's centres, centre-based child care facilities, out of school hours care facilities and the homes of approved family day care educators.

staff

Employees, professional service providers, other paid education and care participants at department education and early childhood services (through contracts and agreements) and tertiary students on placement.

volunteers

All adults providing a volunteer service in department education and early childhood services. This includes volunteers who may receive remuneration for their service from other organisations for example pastoral care workers, mentors or coaches.

Supporting information

Related legislation

[Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017](#)

[Education Act 1972](#)

Related policy documents

[Information sharing guidelines for promoting safety and wellbeing](#)

[Responding to abuse and neglect – education and care training](#)

[Attendance policy](#)

[Protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people \(PDF, 398.9 KB\)](#)

[Responding to problem sexual behaviour in children and young people \(PDF, 5.0 MB\)](#)

[Suicide postvention \(PDF, 725.1 KB\)](#)

[Screening and suitability – child safety](#)

[Managing allegations of sexual misconduct \(PDF, 650.4 KB\)](#)

[Volunteer policy and procedure](#)

[Curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting: early childhood services to year 12 \(PDF, 217.1 KB\)](#)

[Keeping Safe: Child protection curriculum](#)

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