

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE RISK MANAGEMENT AND ABUSE REPORTING POLICY

## 1. Aim and Justification

This policy describes RA Tas risk management strategies and reporting mechanisms which seek to safeguard children and young people from abuse or neglect (including sexual abuse).

According to the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) as many as one in three women and one in twelve men experience some form of sexual abuse as a child.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has identified that there is opportunity for children to be abused in their own homes and social circles, but also in the organisations they spend time in.

This policy defines the roles and responsibilities of all our employees, volunteers, students and contractors to protect children from abuse and neglect. It provides information on the appropriate actions which are to be taken when a child has been abused or has suffered neglect, or when there is reasonable grounds to believe this is likely to occur.

Through the implementation of this policy we will meet relevant state and federal laws relating to safeguarding of children and young people.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all RA Tas Board members, employees, volunteers and contractors and includes all forms of abuse and neglect.

## 3. Policy

### Our commitment

RA Tas is committed to promoting and protecting the best interests of children involved in its programs. We believe that all children and young people, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse, and neglect (including sexual abuse).

All employees, volunteers, students and contractors have a responsibility to take reasonable action to ensure that any child or young person engaged in our services or programs is protected from abuse and neglect. Everyone connected with RA Tas has a responsibility to report any information about suspected child abuse or neglect in line with the laws of the state in which they work.

### Expectations

RA Tas expects that employees, volunteers, students and contractors:

- Make themselves aware of their obligations to report any concerns in line with relevant state law;
- Become aware of their obligation to observe the *Code of Conduct* as it relates to child safety;
- Provide an environment that is supportive of all children's emotional and physical safety;

Understand and implement strategies to detect and prevent child abuse and neglect, and by meeting these expectations RA Tas can ensure that all concerns are responded to and reported to the relevant child protection authorities and/or the Police.

## Strategies

RA Tas monitor its programs, the physical, social and online environments around which they are delivered to identify issues that may expose children or young people to abuse or neglect. We assess the likelihood and probable impact of these concerns and employ a range of preventative strategies to manage and minimise the risk of offending behaviour towards children and young people. These include developing and implementing:

- rigorous screening and selection processes to eliminate potential offenders and to identify people with the correct values to work with children;
- a code of conduct;
- a code of ethics
- Practice and Behaviour Guidelines
- training and supervision activities to develop staff skills;
- strategies to identify and respond to unprofessional relationships and grooming behaviours between children and young people and adults;
- programs to develop family strengths;
- child risk assessments;
- strategies to ensure children and young people have access to transparent and clear information regarding their rights and healthy relationships;
- Procedures to reporting and acting upon risks or concerns.

We believe that the collective implementation of these strategies can significantly contribute to the safety of children and young people.

The implementation of this policy will be monitored and evaluated by our Chief Executive Officer and Senior Management Group.

## A shared responsibility to report any concern

RA Tas employees, volunteers, students and contractors are expected to acknowledge their legal and moral obligation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children or young people associated with the organisation.

Everyone working at RA Tas has a direct or indirect responsibility to ensure that children are protected from abuse and neglect. Everyone connected with RA Tas has a responsibility to report any information about suspected child abuse, neglect (including sexual abuse). This expectation applies regardless of whether the person has statutory mandatory reporting responsibilities or not.

RA Tas describes these responsibilities in the *Code of Conduct, Practice and Behaviour Guidelines* and *Reporting Issues of Significance Policy*.

## Obligation to internally report

RA Tas expects that any employee, volunteer, student or contactor will report any allegation or suspected incident relating to the abuse (including the sexual abuse) of a child or young person. This expectation applies regardless of whether the person has statutory mandatory reporting responsibilities or not.

RA Tas describes these responsibilities in the *Code of Conduct, Practice and Behaviour Guidelines, Reporting of Notifiable Client Matters Policy* and *Reporting Issues of Significance Policy*. These policies and procedures comply with the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997, this Act provides a penalty of a fine for mandatory reporters who do not report their suspicions of child abuse and neglect.

All allegations of abuse are reported to the relevant agencies identified within local state legislation or to the police if the child or young person is at imminent risk of harm or abuse. RA Tas will also make a report to the Australian Childhood Foundation if an allegation of child abuse is made against one of our employees or volunteers.

## 4. Definitions

<b>Child abuse:</b>	For the purposes of this policy, child abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving physical abuse, sexual abuse (and grooming), emotional or psychological abuse, cumulative abuse and neglect. See below for further descriptions.
<b>Child sexual abuse:</b>	Is any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography and grooming (see below).
<b>Cumulative harm:</b>	Refers to a series of acts or omissions that, when viewed separately may not indicate significant risk, but when viewed together suggest a pattern of significant harm.
<b>Emotional or psychological abuse:</b>	Can occur where the behaviour of their parent or caregiver damages the confidence and self-esteem of the child or young person, resulting in serious emotional disturbance or psychological trauma. This can include a range of behaviours such as excessive criticism, withholding affection, exposure to domestic violence, intimidation or threatening behaviour.
<b>Grooming:</b>	Involves predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual abuse at a later time. The offence applies when an adult deliberately establishes an emotional connection, with a child or with a person who has care, supervision or authority for the child with the intention of facilitating the child's involvement in sexual conduct, either with the groomer or another adult.
<b>Neglect:</b>	Is the continued failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child with the basic things needed for his or her proper growth and development, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care and adequate supervision.
<b>Physical abuse:</b>	Is a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child or young person caused by a parent, caregiver or any other person.

### Associated policies and procedures:

This policy is supported by the following RA Tas policies:

- Code of Conduct
- Code of Ethics
- Practice and Behaviour Guidelines
- Policy Check and Working With Children Registration Policy and Procedures
- Reporting Issues of Significance Policy

- Reporting of Notifiable Client Matters Policy

## References:

The relevant legislation, standards and references that apply to this policy include:  
Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997

## Approval:

Approved By:	Mat Rowell
Date of Approval:	<a href="#">Click here to enter a date.</a>
Review Date:	<a href="#">Click here to enter a date.</a>

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<sup>i</sup> <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/prevalence-child-abuse-and-neglect>