

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS ABOUT SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Our Commitment

At Relationships Australia Tasmania (RA Tas) we consider the health, safety and wellbeing of all children and young people to be our highest priority. We strive to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, in particular, through our *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy*.

Our *Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy* has been adopted approved and endorsed by our Chief Executive Officer. It underpins a set of policies and procedures in relation to the protection of children and young people which guide:

- The screening and recruitment of our personnel
- The behaviour of our personnel towards children and young people
- The induction and training of our personnel about safeguarding children and young people
- Our open and effective communication with children and young people and their parents and guardians
- Our responses to the abuse and neglect of children if it occurs and
- Our maintenance of a safeguarding culture in the organisation

All personnel must ensure that their approach and interactions with children and young people are sensitive, respectful and inclusive of all backgrounds and abilities. We promote equity and respect diversity by:

- actively anticipating children's diverse circumstances and responding effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities
- by giving all children access to information, support and complaints processes, and
- paying particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with a disability and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Our personnel are required to:

- undergo an extensive screening process including a Working with Children Check and a National Criminal Records Check
- behave professionally and with care towards children and young people including not acting outside the boundaries of their duties or using their position with the organisation to solicit work with or initiate contact with children and young people who are clients of our organisation
- understand the important responsibility they have to protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation either by our personnel or that occurs outside the scope of our operations and services; and
- create and maintain a child safe culture.

We expect all within our organisation, regardless of their role or level of responsibility, to act to safeguard children from such harm by:

- adopting the practices and behaviour we have set as our standard when carrying out their roles, and
- reporting any abuse or neglect of which they become aware to our management and/or to external authorities responsible for child protection or to police, regardless of whether that abuse is being perpetrated by personnel within our organisation, or by those outside our organisation including those from the child's family, extended family, their family's extended network or strangers.

We are dedicated to protecting the children and young people in our community and have successfully achieved Accreditation with the Australian Childhood Foundation's Safeguarding Children Program.

Responding to Child Abuse Reports and Allegations

We consider any form of child abuse including emotional, physical and sexual abuse, family violence, grooming or neglect as intolerable under any circumstances.

We have a legal, moral and mission driven responsibility to protect children and young people from harm and to ensure that any incident of suspected child abuse is promptly and appropriately dealt with. Our personnel are required to report suspected child abuse to their direct supervisor/manager and the child protection authorities or the police. RA Tas will co-operate with the child protection authorities and police and other agencies as required by law.

Practice and Behaviour Guidelines

RA Tas, our staff and volunteers are required to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct towards children and young people. We have developed Practice and Behaviour Guidelines to identify and prevent behaviour that may be harmful to the children and young people in our care. The following is a summary to those Guidelines.

Supervision

Our personnel are required to, where possible, avoid one-to-one unsupervised situations with children and young people to whom we provide services. Where possible staff are to conduct all activities and/or discussions with children and young people in view of other staff.

Transport

RA Tas prohibit staff from providing transport to children and young people as part of our service, unless there has been specific prior authorisation from a Manager and the child or young person's parent or guardian. To gain approval from RA Tas, our staff are required to submit details about the proposed journey including the form of transport, the reason and details of who will be present.

Overnight Stays

RA Tas prohibit overnight stays as part of the service we provide to children and young people.

Physical Contact

Any physical contact with children and young people must be appropriate to the delivery of RA Tas services and based on the needs of the child or young person (such as to assist or comfort a distressed young person) rather than on the needs of our staff.

Positive Guidance

We aim to make children and young people aware of the acceptable limits of their behaviour. Children are encouraged to feel safe and be safe. There are times when our staff may be required to use appropriate behavioural management strategies to ensure:

- an effective and positive environment
- the safety and wellbeing of children, young people or personnel participating in our services.

Any behaviour management strategy used must be fair, respectful and appropriate to the developmental stage of the children or young people involved.

The child or young person is to be provided with clear directions and given an opportunity to redirect their misbehaviour in a positive way. Under no circumstances are our staff to take disciplinary action involving physical punishment or any form of treatment that could reasonably be considered as degrading, cruel, frightening or humiliating.

Use of language and tone of voice

Language and tone of voice used in the presence of children and young people should not be harmful to children and should provide clear direction, boost their confidence, encourage or affirm them.

Professional role boundaries

Our staff are not to act outside the confines of their duties, as specified in their position description, when helping to deliver our services.

If an RA Tas staff member becomes aware of a situation in which a child or young person requires assistance that is beyond the confines of that person's role, or beyond the scope of our organisation's usual service, they will at the earliest opportunity:

- refer the matter to an appropriate support agency
- refer the children or young person to an appropriate support agency
- Contact the child or young person's parent or guardian, and
- Seek advice and inform RA Tas management of any of the above.

RA Tas prohibit staff from attending any private social function at the request of a child or young person, or their family who has participating in, or is participating in RA Tas services.

Photographs of children and young people

Children and young people to whom RA Tas deliver services are to be photographed while involved in our services only if:

- A Manager has granted prior and specific approval
- Prior written parental/guardian authorisation is obtained
- The context is directly related to participation in our services
- The child is appropriately dressed and posed

Use of electronic and online communication

Where possible, email and text messages sent to a child or young person is to be copied to their parent or guardian. Any communication is to be restricted to issues directly associated with delivering our services, such as advising that a scheduled event is cancelled.

Use, possession or supply of alcohol or drugs

Whilst delivering services, staff must not use or be in possession of an illegal drug or alcohol, be incapacitated by any other legal drug such as prescription or over the counter drugs, supply alcohol or drugs (including tobacco) to children or young people participating in our service.

Giving Gifts

Giving of gifts by our service delivery staff to children and young people to whom we provide a service is subject to obtaining prior authorisation from a Manager and the child's parent or guardian.

Promoting equality and diversity

All staff must ensure that their approach and interaction with children and young people are sensitive, respectful and inclusive of all backgrounds and abilities. Where RA Tas has involvement with children who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds or who have a disability, our personnel will promote their safety (including cultural safety), participation and empowerment.

Further Information

If you have any concerns regarding the safety of a child or young person or would like to discuss any of the information further, please contact RA Tas on 1300 364 277.

For more information about child safety and to view our full safeguarding children policies visit our website <http://www.tas.relationships.org.au/>