

# Child Safe Environments Policy



## Commitment to the Safety of Children and Young People

AHH Lifeskills is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for all children and young people. Our policy complies with the **Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017**, the **Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016**, and aligns with the **National Principles for Child Safe Organisations**.

AHH Lifeskills values and respects all children and young people, embracing diversity regardless of abilities, gender, socio-economic background, or cultural identity. Bullying, harassment, and any form of harm will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

## Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees, volunteers, contractors, and students on work placement within AHH Lifeskills.
- Collectively referred to as "workers" in this policy.

All workers are required to agree in writing to uphold and act in accordance with this policy.

## Definitions

**Children:** Individuals under the age of 18 years, as defined by Section 5 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children are entitled to special protection and care to ensure their safety, well-being, and developmental needs.

**Young people:** Persons aged 12 to 24 years, bridging the gap between childhood and adulthood.

**Harm:** physical or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission), including harm caused by sexual, physical, mental, or emotional abuse or neglect (as defined by Section 17 of the Safety Act).

**Discrimination:** The unfair or prejudicial treatment of an individual or group based on characteristics such as disability, race, gender, age, religion, or other protected attributes.

**Risk:** The likelihood of harm or negative outcomes occurring due to identified vulnerabilities or unsafe conditions.

## Communication

AHH Lifeskills ensures this policy is:

- Available on our website and included in employee induction handbooks.
- Communicated clearly to children, young people, and their families, including the procedure for lodging a complaint at onboarding.
- Presented in child-friendly formats using simplified language and visual aids where appropriate, and feedback from children and families is encouraged.

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Workers are educated to provide age-appropriate explanations of children's rights and their options to voice concerns or complaints.

## Code of Conduct

In line with the AHH Lifeskills Code of Conduct, all workers must:

- Promote and protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Treat all individuals with respect, fairness, and integrity.
- Maintain clear professional boundaries.
- Report suspected harm or inappropriate behaviour promptly.

Workers must not:

- Engage in physical or verbal abuse.
- Develop inappropriate personal relationships with children or young people.
- Discriminate or neglect their duty of care.

Breaches of this Code of Conduct should be reported to management via email or telephone:

- **Email:** [hr@ahhlifeskills.com](mailto:hr@ahhlifeskills.com)
- Managing Director – **Phone:** 0429 323 221

Serious breaches may result in disciplinary action, including suspension (with or without pay), formal warnings, termination and/or litigation.

## Recruitment

AHH Lifeskills implements stringent recruitment practices, including:

- Including our commitment to child safety in all job advertisements.
- Conducting face-to-face interviews with child safety-related questions.
- Verifying all staff possess a valid Working with Children Check (WWCC) before commencing employment.

## Risk Management

AHH Lifeskills identifies and mitigates risks, including:

- **Physical contact:** Workers explain and seek consent before any necessary physical contact. Workers must limit physical contact to what is necessary for care or safety such as assisting with mobility or providing first aid. Unacceptable contact includes any form of physical discipline, use of force or unnecessary touching.
- **Online communication:** Social media interactions with clients are strictly prohibited, including cyberbullying, unauthorised sharing of personal information, and inappropriate digital content.

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- Workers are prohibited from sharing any client images or information on social media.
- All online interactions must occur through approved organisational platforms and for work purposes only.
- Cyberbullying or inappropriate digital interactions are treated as serious breaches of this policy and the company Code of Conduct.
- Transportation: Parent/guardian consent is mandatory for transporting children, including consent to transport more than one child at the same time, e.g. group excursions.
- Environmental and Indirect Risks: AHH Lifeskills assesses environmental safety regularly to identify and address potential hazards. The company Risk Register is updated as risks and hazards are identified.
- Emergency Preparedness: AHH Lifeskills has emergency procedures in place to prioritise the safety of children and young people during evacuations or other emergencies.
  - All workers receive regular training on these procedures.
- Workers complete **'Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse, and Neglect'** training every three years, if they provide services to children or young people on school sites.
- All workers complete **'Keeping Children and Young People Safe'** training via NGO Training Centre every three years. Non-compliance with training may result in disciplinary action.
  - Employees who hold a valid RRHAN-EC certificate are not required to complete the 'Keeping Children and Young People Safe' NGO Training Centre module. However, employees who have only completed the 'Keeping Children and Young People Safe' module and are required to work on a school site must obtain a valid RRHAN-EC certificate before commencing work onsite.
- Child safeguarding topics are a standing agenda item at team and management meetings to keep training relevant and support improving child safe measures.
- Regular supervision and performance appraisals include child safety topics where relevant.
- Ongoing support is provided through access to management and resources.

## Complaints and Feedback

Complaints from children or their parents/stakeholders, or workers must be provided to:

- The immediate supervisory level of AHH Lifeskills: Team Leaders; or
- Using a Feedback Form: <https://www.ahhlifeskills.com/feedback-form/>
- Alternatively, a Disability Advocate can be sought to speak on the client's behalf through: <https://askizzy.org.au/advice-and-advocacy/>

Empowerment of Children and Young People: AHH Lifeskills encourages children and young people to actively participate in decisions affecting them.

- AHH Lifeskills provides age-appropriate education on their rights, including how to report harm or inappropriate behavior safely.
- Feedback mechanisms are regularly reviewed to ensure accessibility for all participants.

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If concerns are not resolved at the immediate supervisory level, they can be escalated to the Human Resources Manager: [hr@ahhlifeskills.com](mailto:hr@ahhlifeskills.com)

Unresolved matters are directed to the Managing Director or an external body such as the Ombudsman, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, or the Department of Child Protection.

## Reporting and Responding to Harm or Risk of Harm

All mandated reporters within AHH Lifeskills are legally required to:

- Report immediate risks to the South Australia Police (SAPOL) at **000**.
- Notify the **Child Abuse Report Line (CARL)** on **13 14 78** or via <https://ecarl.sa.gov.au/> if they suspect harm.
  - All **serious concerns** must be reported via the report line and not via the online reporting system.
  - Serious concerns include when you suspect a child or infant is in imminent or immediate danger of:
    - Serious harm
    - Serious injury
    - Chronic neglect
    - When a child is in care of the Department for Child Protection and you suspect they are at risk.

The Authorised Officer, or alternate Authorised Officer, of AHH Lifeskills must:

- Notify the Central Assessment Unit (Department of Human Services: <https://www.dcsiscreening.sa.gov.au/>) as soon as practicably possible if an worker or volunteer who has a Working With Children Check (WWCC) and AHH Lifeskills becomes aware:
  - *that the person is prohibited from working with children under a law of the Commonwealth, or of another State or Territory; or*
  - *that the person is, or becomes, a registrable offender under the Child Sex Offenders Registration Act 2006; or*
  - *the person makes a disclosure to the employer under section 66 of the Child Sex Offenders Registration Act 2006.*
  - *Employer becomes aware of any assessable information in relation to the person. This includes serious criminal, child protection and discipline and misconduct information that may indicate that the individual may pose a risk of harm to children.*
    - The Central Assessment Unit will risk assess the information and make a decision. AHH Lifeskills will only be notified if the worker is prohibited from Working With Children Check.

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In line with any reports of harm or risk of harm to external authorities, an internal investigation will be conducted and completed. The investigation outcome will be shared with the impacted child and/or their parent or authorised decision maker.

Incidents are documented securely, and workers alleged to have caused harm are removed from child-related roles pending investigation. The following measures are implemented:

- They will be treated with fairness and confidentiality throughout the process.
- Support, including counseling or legal assistance, will be provided if needed.

## Policy Review

This policy is reviewed a minimum of every two years or following significant incidents, new identified risks, internal or external audits or when relevant legislative changes occur. AHH Lifeskills will lodge a child safe environments compliance statement with the Department of Human Services each time the policy is reviewed and updated.

## Relevant legislation, guidelines, standards and documents

- Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)
- Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (SA)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 (SA)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- South Australian Department for Child Protection Guidelines
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Practice Standards
- NGO Training Centre
- Mandatory Notification Information Booklet (SA)
- National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031
- South Australian Equal Opportunity Commission Guidelines
- Risk Management Policy and Procedure
- Incident Management Policy and Procedure
- Feedback Form
- Complaints and Feedback Register
- Incident Register
- Continuous Improvement Register
- AHH Lifeskills Code of Conduct

Approved by: Marci King, Human Resources Manager

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