

CHILD AND YOUNG PEOPLE PROTECTION POLICY

Purpose

Bluearth Foundation has developed this Policy for when providing services to children and young people. The purpose is to build and maintain environments that are both child safe and child friendly. These are environments where children and young people are protected, and:

- they feel respected, valued, and encouraged to reach their full potential; and
- they are heard.

Statement of commitment to the safety and protection of children and young people

Bluearth Foundation values and respects children and young people and is committed to their safety. Bluearth Foundation is committed to the protection from harm or risk of harm to children and young people by:

- compliance with the Council of Australian Governments' National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, <https://childsafefoundation.org.au/national-principles>.
- compliance with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016.
- embracing all children and young people regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, or social economic or cultural background and upholding equity always
- not tolerating any form of bullying and harassment and championing a child safe culture which is modelled at all levels of the organisation, from the top down and bottom up.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, affiliates, work placement students, contractors, and members referred to throughout the policy collectively as workers. All workers are required to agree in writing to accept and act in accordance with the policy.

Communication

- This Child and Young People Protection Policy and all related documents are provided to all workers as part of their induction following recruitment.
- This Child and Young People Protection Policy and all related documents are available on our website, on request, and provided as part of an induction pack at the first visit.
- This Child and Young People Protection Policy and all related documents are available on our website and on request to all children, young people, and families.
- We encourage and respect the views of children and young people and involve them in decision making as appropriate.
- We provide clear age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate explanations to children and young people including their right to safety, their right to be listened to and that they can provide feedback or make a complaint if they have a concern, to any worker or ask their parent/guardian to do this on their behalf. We will listen to and act upon any complaints or concerns that a child or young person raises with us.

Code of Conduct

Bluearth Foundation recognises that caring for children and young people brings additional responsibilities for all workers.

All workers are responsible for promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by:

- always adhering to the organisation's child safe policy and taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people.
- treating everyone, including those of different race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes and religious beliefs with respect and honesty and ensure equity is upheld.
- being a positive role model to children and young people in all conduct with them.
- setting clear boundaries and maintaining appropriate behaviours with children and young people – boundaries help everyone to understand their roles.
- listening and responding appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people.
- being alert to bullying behaviours and responding promptly and appropriately.
- ensuring another adult is always present or in sight when conducting one-to-one consulting, coaching, instruction, or other activities.
- being alert to children and young people who have been harmed, or may be at risk of harm and reporting this quickly to the Child Abuse Report Line (13 14 78).
- responding quickly, fairly, and transparently to any complaints made by a child, young person, or their parent/guardian.
- encouraging children and young people to 'have a say' on issues that are important to them.

All workers must not:

- engage in rough physical games.
- develop any 'special' relationships with children and young people that could be seen as favouritism, such as the offering of gifts or special treatment.
- do things of a personal nature that a child or young person can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes.
- discriminate against any child or young person because of age, gender, cultural background, religion, vulnerability, or sexuality.

Breaches or suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct are to be reported to management. Breaches or suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct will be taken seriously and dealt with quickly, fairly, and transparently. Any worker who breaches the Code of Conduct will face disciplinary action and depending on severity of the breach, may face termination.

Recruitment, Selection and Screening

To ensure Bluearth Foundation engages the most suitable people to work with children and young people we have the following recruitment practices in place:

- our commitment to child safety is included in all job advertisements.
- clear position descriptions that include our commitment to child safety and wellbeing.
- hold face-to-face interviews that use behavioural questions to determine the applicant's knowledge of child safeguarding.
- obtain at least two referee checks and qualification checks.

In accordance with the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016, our organisation is registered with the DHS Screening Unit, and we link all Working with Children Checks (WWCC). All workers over the age of 14 years who will be working in a role with children and young people must hold a current, not prohibited WWCC issued by the Screening Unit of the Department of Human Services, provide evidence of this prior to employment and renew every 5 years. We will verify the accuracy of all WWCCs in the DHS Screening Unit portal as required by law.

We will immediately contact the Department of Human Services Screening Unit when we become aware of assessable information regarding any person involved with our organisation, including any serious criminal offence, child protection information, or disciplinary or misconduct information.

Training, Supervision and Support

Training will be provided, at a minimum, annually to all workers. All workers are required to participate in training which includes obligations under The Child and Young People Protection Policy.

This training will incorporate child safe environments and mandatory reporting requirements as well as including cultural competency training with content on how to build culturally safe environments. Senior employees will deliver training to provide necessary supervision and support to all attendees.

We have strategies in place to supervise, train and support workers to understand our organisation's child safe policy, their mandatory reporting obligations, how to build culturally safe environments and their responsibilities to create a child safe and friendly environment. Our strategies include:

Training:

- as part of their induction, ensure all workers read and understand the Mandatory Reporting Information Booklet available at: https://dhs.sa.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/103179/CSE-Mandatory-notification-information-booklet.PDF
- include child safety as a standing item on meeting agendas.

Supervision:

- regular supervision sessions that include a focus on child safety and wellbeing.

Support:

- an induction process including a copy of this policy document.
- regular performance appraisals that discuss safeguarding children and young people.

Reporting and responding to harm or risk of harm

We aim to ensure that children and young people are safe from harm and risk of harm. Section 17 of the Safety Act defines 'harm' to mean physical or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission), including harm caused by sexual, physical, mental, or emotional abuse or neglect. Mandated reporters in our organisation are workers who:

- provide services to children and young people.
- hold a management position in the organization, the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of those services to children and young people.

Mandated reporters have a legal obligation to notify the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 as soon as practicable if they have a suspicion that a child or young person has been harmed or may be at risk of harm. If the child or young person is at immediate risk, report to South Australia Police (SAPOL) on 000.

Even if not a mandated reporter, any person can report harm or risk of harm to a child or young person. The individual who identifies the harm or risk of harm is encouraged to make the report to authorities and can request support from another worker to do so if required.

Information about making appropriate reports of harm or risk of harm is available from the South Australian Department for Child Protection website:

<https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse>.

All adult workers (even if not a mandated reporter) have a legal obligation to report child sexual abuse to the police and to protect a child from sexual abuse. Failure to meet these obligations may be considered a criminal offence.

Following a report being made to CARL or SAPOL workers must make an internal report to management.

We will be guided by the Department for Child Protection and/or SAPOL after a report has been made as to whether we can conduct an internal investigation.

If a worker is reported to CARL or SAPOL for causing harm or risk of harm to a child or young person, they will be removed from any role that involves working with any child or young person until authorities have concluded their investigation.

Following a report to CARL or SAPOL we will support the child or young person by:

- referring the child, young person, or their family to other appropriate services.
- continuing to provide a service to the child, young person and their family and monitor their circumstances.

We will document all information received regarding the report and store this securely in a separate file.

Reporting and responding to general complaints or feedback

Providing opportunities for complaints and feedback ensures that children, young people, and their families feel valued and respected and enables us to improve the quality of our service. Children, young people, and their families are informed that they can provide feedback or make a complaint as part of their welcome pack when they engage Bluearth Foundation.

Correspondence, complaints, and feedback can be provided verbally to any worker or direct to management either by telephone on 1300 784 467 or via email at mail@bluearth.org

We will deal with all correspondence, complaints and feedback received promptly, sensitively, and fairly. We will:

- listen to any complaint/feedback.
- the person receiving the complaint will make a record of it if received verbally.
- advise the time expected for an outcome.
- if a worker receives a complaint, they must forward it to management as soon as possible.
- management will respond to the complainant with an outcome in a timely manner.
- clearly document and securely store decisions and actions taken in response to complaints and feedback.
- make sure that procedural fairness is always followed.

If the child, young person, or their family is not happy with the outcome from the complaints process they can contact the following people and services:

- Pierre Comis, Bluearth Foundation, Chair of Board of Directors - pcomis@bluearth.org
- Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner - 08 8226 8666
- Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency - 1300 419 495
- Australian Human Rights Commission: www.humanrights.gov.au or 1300 656 419
- South Australian Equal Opportunities Commission (for complaints relating to discrimination): www.eoc.sa.gov.au or 08 8207 1977

Risk Management

Bluearth Foundation has identified the following risks to children and young people and the actions required to minimise and manage each of those risks.

Identified risk	Actions to minimise risk
Physical contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> any physical contact must be appropriate to the delivery of services being provided. where physical contact is required, this is undertaken in a safe way by explaining why contact is required and what will happen and asking the child/young person for their permission (or their family if this is more appropriate) before proceeding. Unnecessary physical contact is not allowed.
Online communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cyber safety and social media guidelines are in place and provided to all workers. appropriate supervision is provided for all online activities. workers must not communicate with children or young people via social media
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> children and young people are to be supervised by parents/guardians at all times. if a child/young person is not collected by parent/guardian at the end of a training session, two adults are to stay with the child/young person until they are collected. if providing one to one consultation with a child/young person will be in line of sight of another adult.
Taking images of children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consent of child/young person and their parent/guardian is required. disclosure will be made as to how the image is to be used and consent must be provided by the child/young person, and their parent/guardian. images must be presented in a way that de-identifies the child/ young person.
Physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain a risk register that is reviewed annually to ensure effectiveness. conduct risk assessments for all activities. ensure all equipment is safe, clean and in good working order
Privacy and confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all documents containing confidential information will be stored privately in a locked filing cabinet (or similar place with restricted access). digital files containing confidential information shall be protected electronically by restricting access to only those requiring it to perform their duties. workers must not disclose information regarding any child/ young person without written consent from the child/young person and their parent/guardian.

Policy Review

Bluearth Foundation will, at a minimum, review this policy and the related procedures once every 5 years as required by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017. This Policy will also be reviewed when:

- new or added risks are identified for children or young people, which may require a change in the policy or procedures.
- a critical incident where a child or young person has experienced harm through involvement in our organisation.
- concerns are raised by anyone involved in our organisation about child safety or child welfare in our organisation.
- awareness or compliance to the child safe policy and/or procedures is low.
- legislative changes/requirements.

Bluearth Foundation will lodge a new child safe environments compliance statement with the Department of Human Services each time it is reviewed, and the policy is updated.

Policy Date: 7 May 2024

Review Date: 7 May 2029