

	Title: <b>CHILD SAFETY POLICY</b>	
	Version: 1	Approved: Committee of Management February 2017
	Administered: Manager	Next Review: February 2020

## Background

Wingate Avenue Community Centre (WACC) is committed to child safety.

All students under eighteen (18) years of age who are supported by Wingate Avenue Community Centre (WACC) have a right to feel and be safe. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children. We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We promote diversity and tolerance, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children; and
- Ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to detail WACC's child safe processes and procedures. All students and children under eighteen (18) years of age who are supported by Wingate Avenue

## Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to senior management and any staff member or volunteer working with students or other WACC stakeholders who are under the age of 18.

The Policy and Procedure details the processes and procedures related to child safe legislation.

Failure to protect criminal offences in relation to any child under the age of 18 who is, or may come, under the care, supervision or authority of WACC.

## Relevant Legislation/Standards

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005, amended 2011 (Section 182)
- Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2015
- Family Law Act 1975
- Working With Children Act 2005
- Working With Children Regulations 2006
- Child Safe Standards

## Definition

A **child safety officer/champion** is the person at WACC who has knowledge of child safety issues, and is the point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of child abuse.

**Failure to protect offence:** A new 'failure to protect' offence applies to people within organisations who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so. The offence relates to risk of sexual abuse by adults, 18 years and over.

A **person in authority** is someone who, by reason of their position within an organisation, has the power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 years, who is under their care, supervision or authority, may become the victim of sexual abuse committed by an adult associated with the organisation.

Whether someone is considered to be a person in authority depends on the degree of supervision, power or responsibility the person has to remove or reduce the substantial risk posed by an adult associated with the organisation. People in authority will usually have the ability to make management level decisions, such as assigning and directing work, ensuring compliance with the organisation's volunteer policy and other operational arrangements.

A **person associated with an organisation** may include a person who is an officer, office holder, employee, manager, owner, volunteer, contractor, service provider or agent of the organisation. This definition does not include a person who solely receives services from the organisation.

**Grooming offence:** The offence of grooming concerns predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time.

The offence applies where an adult communicates, by words or conduct, with a child under the age of 16 years 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.

Grooming does not necessarily involve any sexual activity or even discussion of sexual activity – for example, it may only involve establishing a relationship with the child, parent or carer for the purpose of facilitating sexual activity at a later time.

The sexual conduct must constitute an indictable sexual offence. This includes offences such as sexual penetration of a child, indecent assault and indecent act in the presence of a child. It does not include summary offences, such as upskirting and indecent behaviour in public.

The offence can be committed by any person aged 18 years or over. The offence applies to communication with children under 16 years

**Organisational culture and values** is defined as a set of values, expectations and standards that influence the behaviour of the members of an organisation.

## General Principles

As WACC strives to develop dynamic, responsive and innovative educational programs, teaching and learning experiences, it will intentionally promote and protect the interests and safety of children, and a child-safe environment for all children and young people in its care.

This will be achieved by

- having a zero tolerance for child abuse
- working to actively listen to and empower children
- having systems to protect children from abuse, and will take all allegations and concerns very seriously and responding to them consistently in line with the organisation's policies and procedures
- being committed to promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability

- engaging and employing only the most suitable people to work with children along with providing high quality supervision and professional development.

Embedding an organisational culture of child safety is critical to reducing the risk of child abuse in the RTO as the organisational culture defines what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour by people within WACC.

In implementing the minimum child safety standards staff will take account of and make reasonable efforts to accommodate the diversity of all children, including (but not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable.

## Procedures

Protection of children and child safety is ensured through a range of strategies, which aim to embed an organisational culture of child safety, relating to:

- Human resource and recruitment practices
- Bi Monthly risk review (see risk management)
- Clear expectations of staff and volunteers
- Staff training
- Appointment of a Child Safe Officer
- Child empowerment and participation
- Communication strategies with children
- Procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse.

A number these strategies are outline more fully in a related policy and procedure.

The community is informed of policies and procedures through the WACC webpage and course handbooks. Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly as per the Version Control Policy and Procedures document.

### **Culture of child safety & statement of commitment (Standards 1 & 2)**

The Committee has developed and approved a child safe statement:

*As WACC strives to develop dynamic, responsive and innovative educational programs, teaching and learning experiences, it will intentionally promote and protect the interests and safety of children, and a child-safe environment for all children and young people in its care.*

*This will be achieved by*

- *having a zero tolerance for child abuse*
- *working to actively listen to and empower children*
- *having systems to protect children from abuse, and taking all allegations and concerns very seriously and responding to them consistently in line with the organisation's policies and procedures*
- *being committed to promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability*
- *engaging only the most suitable people to work with children along with providing high quality supervision and professional development.*
- *Ensuring staff working with children have a current working with children's check.*

The statement is published on WACC's webpage as a means of communicating the WACC's expectations to staff, students, volunteers and the wider WACC community.

The General Manager of WACC is responsible for developing child safe strategies in consultation with the Committee of Management, staff, students and wider WACC community. This is an annual review process with 3 stages.

1. Identify strategies
2. Implement strategies
3. Review/evaluate strategies

Areas that are considered as a part of the review are:

- Existing policies and procedure/practices
- Partnerships and contractual arrangements
- WACC's risk management plan/register
- The diverse needs of children/young people

Progress in the implementation of strategies is recorded on the Child Safe Action Plan which is made available to the WACC Committee of Management at each Committee meeting and reviewed bi-monthly.

### **Expectations and requirements of staff and volunteers (Standard 3)**

The WACC Code of Conduct ensures all staff and volunteers have a clear understanding of the WACC's expectations and requirements in relation to interacting with children and young people enrolled at.

Refer to the WACC Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure for detail.

### **Human resources and recruitment practices (Standard 4)**

#### *Recruitment*

WACC has in place strategies to ensure when employing and managing staff that aim to protect the interests and safety of children and young people enrolled at WACC.

Each staff position description, where the role involves child connected work, has a clear statement that sets out:

- the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety; and
- the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety.

All applicants for jobs that involve child connected work for WACC are informed about the WACC's child safe practices (including the code of conduct) through:

- statements of job ads & position description
- child safe statement on webpage
- background information provided at interview stage

The following methods are used for screening and doing background checks on applicants:

- Working with Children Check status, and
- Criminal history check
- Proof of personal identity (at least two forms of personal identification )
- Proof of professional or other qualifications (originals to be sighted);
- The person's history of work involving children (checked through referee checks that also address the person's suitability for the job and working with children;
- Google and social media checks, and
- VRQA Staff Selection Checklist (see Appendix 2)

This is the responsibility of the General Manager or where delegated, the Compliance and Further Education Manager.

## *Supervision and Support*

All new WACC staff undergo a formal induction process (See Employment Policy and Procedure) which includes:

- Relevant policies and procedures
- Introduction to Child Safe Officer
- Initial training video that covers how to recognise and respond to child abuse (if required)

Appropriate supervision and support arrangements are established during the induction phase by the Childcare Manager.

Supervision, as an ongoing process, is part of the developmental role, which assumes towards employees, by supporting work practices and achievement needs of staff, resulting in positive outcomes for students.

Line-supervision is a WACC responsibility and will take place internally, normally with the General Manager supervising the managers/coordinators and managers/coordinators supervising WACC teaching, childcare and administrative support staff.

The focus of line-supervision is as an administrative, educational and supportive partnership between the Supervisor and the Supervisee. It is dialogic by nature, involving a two-way exchange.

The supervisor performs administrative, educative, and supportive functions in relation to the supervisee in the context of a positive relationship:

*Administrative - relates to management issues and includes the planning, assignment, review, assessment and evaluation of work and is the process through which the supervisee is accountable and responsible for the quality and quantity of his/her work as well as the understanding and following of established policy and procedure.*

*Educational - involves the provision of knowledge and skills which are necessary for the employee to carry out effective practice. Education supervision is one aspect of the continued professional development of the employee.*

*Supportive - concerned with helping the employee deal with job-related tasks, associated stress levels and, where necessary, challenging attitudes. Supervision is designed to sustain employee morale giving those supervised a feeling of support and achievement in their work, so that they can achieve the best possible outcomes for clients.*

Supervision is also a mechanism for monitoring and assessing a staff member's continuing suitability for child connected work.

## *Staff Training*

- Staff training, as per the WACC Professional Development and Training Policy, is determined annually and will take into account WACC's commitment to protecting the interests of children and young people as well as their safety. Training may relate to individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse;
- child abuse risks in the RTO environment (including being able to identify incidents of grooming);
- the RTO's current child safety standards.

Plus for teaching and support staff:

- curriculum content<sup>1</sup> and teaching and learning strategies,
- available support services
- implementing policy and procedure,
- staff skills in identifying and responding to child abuse

Refer to the WACC Staff Professional Development and Training Policy for more detail.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministerial Order No. 870 Section 13.1

### *Performance Management*

It is the responsibility of the WACC Committee of Management, for the position of Executive Officer, to ensure engagement documentation clearly states that proven breaches of the organisation's policies, procedures and code of conduct will be regarded as serious matters attracting sanctions ranging from reprimand to dismissal. This responsibility is delegated to the General Manager by the Committee of Management for all other staff as well as service providers, contractors and volunteers.

It is the responsibility of the Committee of Management to ensure performance appraisal templates provide the opportunity for the General Manager to demonstrate performance in relation to child safe practices. This responsibility is delegated to the General Manager for all other staff members.

### **Procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse (Standard 5)**

WACC responds to allegations of child abuse committed against a child enrolled with the organisation by an employee, student, contractor, volunteer or any other person connected with the RTO. The WACC Staff & Volunteer Disciplinary Policy and Procedure are followed along with WACC Action Plan for Protection of Children (Appendix 1 of this document).

The WACC Child Safety Officer is to be notified in all cases

The WACC Child Safety Officer is the WACC Childcare Manager. The Childcare Manager is required to have knowledge of child safety issues, and is the point of contact for staff and volunteers who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of child abuse.

This position is identifiable on the staff member's position description and communicated to the Wingate Community at induction, and through the course and childcare handbooks.

### **Risk management**

#### **(Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove the risk of abuse)**

**As relates to Failure to Protect legislated requirements**, it is the responsibility of the General Manager, Management Team and program coordinators (as persons of authority) to act to remove the risk if they know that a person of or over the age of 18 years, associated with their organisation, poses a substantial risk to a relevant child. The Education Manager will remove the person of or over the age of 18, whether he or she is a staff member, volunteer, contractor, service provider or agent of the organisation from contact with children and will report to the appropriate authorities. The appropriate Disciplinary Procedure will then be activated depending on if the person is an employee, contractor or volunteer.

Where the person of or over the age of 18 years, who poses a substantial risk to a relevant child, is the General Manager's responsibility to remove the person from contact with children, report to the authorities and commence disciplinary proceedings. The General Manager would ensure that reporting occur in line with the WACC Action Plan for Protection of Children (Appendix 1 of this document).

As part of managing risk, child safety is considered when undertaking risk audits and in developing risk management strategies and procedures.

The WACC Committee of Management oversees the development and implementation of risk management process that takes into account child safety in the WACC environment including the identification and mitigation of the risk(s) of child abuse in the RTO environment by taking into account:

- the nature of each WACC training environment,
- the activities expected to be conducted in that environment (including the provision of services by contractors or outside organisations), and
- the characteristics and needs of all children expected to be present in that environment.

Where there are identified risks of child abuse occurring those risks and specifies the action(s) is to take to reduce or remove the risks (risk controls) as well as monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls will be recorded on the Risk Management Plan.

Refer to the WACC Risk Management Policy and Procedure for further detail.

The risk management plan including actions taken to mitigate risk is made available by-monthly to the Committee of Management meeting. The plan is also made available to staff and RTO community upon request.

At least annually, the Committee of Management ensures that appropriate guidance and training is provided to the individual members of the Committee and WACC staff about:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse;
- child abuse risks in the RTO environment (including being able to identify incidents of grooming; and
- the WACC's current child safety standards.

It is the responsibility of the General Manager to organise this training in consultation with staff and the Committee of Management.

### **Strategies to promote child empowerment and participation (Standard 7)**

The WACC curriculum at all levels includes<sup>2</sup>:

- standards of behaviour for students attending the RTO;
- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality, protective behaviours such as child abuse awareness and prevention & boundaries);
- resilience;
- health and their own bodies.

As part of WACC's annual planning processes, the General Manager reviews staff skill-sets to ensure the deliver the above curriculum is done by appropriate skilled and experienced staff. Where the skills-sets are not available internally the General Manager will organise appropriate staff professional development or will source consultants/other services to deliver the content.

WACC ensures that children and young people and their carers at WACC know WACC cares about their feelings and their safety through a range of strategies which are determined by the Child Safe Strategies annual review process and made available via:

- The WACC Website: [www.wingateave.com.au](http://www.wingateave.com.au)
- Student Handbooks
- Childcare Information Booklet
- Classroom displays<sup>3</sup>

### **Glossary**

RTO – Registered Training Organisation

### **Related Policies and Procedures**

Code of Conduct  
Duty of Care Policy and Procedures  
Risk Management Policy

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<sup>2</sup> Ministerial Order No. 870 Section 13.1

<sup>3</sup> Ministerial Order No. 870 Section 13.2

Professional Development and Training Policy  
Student Safety and Welfare in Training Courses Policy and Procedure

Adopted by Committee of Management date) 20 February 2017

Signed by Chairperson: Raoul Wainwright

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RDW', with a horizontal line underneath it.



## Appendix 1: WACC Action Plan for Protection of Children

### **YOU MUST TAKE ACTION**

Personnel play a critical role in protecting children in our care.

You must act, by following the Four Critical Actions below, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.

You must act if you form a suspicion/reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).

You must use an incident reporting form to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

#### **ACTION 1: Responding to an emergency**

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to ACTION 2.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you must ensure their safety by:

- Separating alleged victims and others involved.
- Administering first aid.
- Calling 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns.
- Identifying a contact person in your organisation for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

#### **Action 2: Reporting to authorities**

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

You must report all instances of suspected child abuse or suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Police.

You must also report internally to the Child Safety Officer and WACC management.

If the source of suspected abuse is from within the family or community, you must report the suspected abuse to the relevant Child Protection Authority in the State or Territory jurisdiction.

This includes if a child is considered to be:

- In need of protection from child abuse
- At risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

#### **Action 3: Contacting parents / carers**

The Child Safety Officer and WACC management must consult with Child Protection and / or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- Not to contact the parents/carers (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parents/carers to be contacted); or
- To contact the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).

#### **Action 4: Providing ongoing support**

WACC must provide support for children impacted by abuse. This includes the development of a Student Support Plan developed in consultation with wellbeing professional and/or counselling staff.

Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals.

