

CHILDREN AND OHER VULNERABLE PERSONS PROTECTION OPERATIONAL POLICY



POLICY TITLE:	CHILDREN AND OHER VULNERABLE PERSONS PROTECTION POLICY		
VERSION:	005	DATE EFFECTIVE:	01/06/2016
AUTHORISED BY:	Chief Executive Officer	DATE REVIEWED:	19/04/2024

SUMMARY

Our Child Safety Policy ensures that every child and vulnerable person we work with is protected from harm and treated with respect and care, following strict safety guidelines

PURPOSE

ARC Disability Services Inc (ARC) recognises the participant's right to feel safe and live in an environment that protects from assault, neglect, exploitation, or any other form of abuse. This policy specifically looks at the requirements when working with participants under eighteen years.

As part of our risk strategy, this policy has been devised to ensure that our organisation complies with State and Commonwealth requirements and links to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons*, the *United Nations Convention on the Child's Rights*, and the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*

The policy encompasses a comprehensive framework for adherence to the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (QLD)* regarding employment and volunteer arrangements, including the implementation of a Working with Children Check – Blue Card for all employees.

SCOPE

This policy must be adhered to by all persons associated with the organisation, including employees, volunteers, participants, and family / carers. This policy must be adhered to at all times when a person is working, volunteering with, or representing the organisation.

IMPLEMENTATION

ARC as a regulated child-related business, adheres to the **No Card No Start** Queensland state government legislative requirements, mandating that all staff must possess a current blue card for any risk-assessed role involving children.

Our organisation ensures compliance with the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (QLD)*, linking all blue cards to our entity. This requirement extends to paid employees and volunteers engaging in child-related work or activities, with exemptions for specific professionals.

Mandated reporters within our organisation record and report any abuse and ARC creates a supportive environment for reporting without fear of retribution. We acknowledge prevention as the primary safeguard against abuse and neglect, implementing prevention strategies as part of our duty of care obligations.

COMMITMENTS TO CHILD SAFETY

ARC makes the following commitments to child safety:

- Take a preventative, proactive, and participatory approach to child safety.
- Value and empower children to participate in decisions that affect their lives.
- Create a culture of openness that supports all persons to disclose risks of harm to children safely.
- Respect diversity in cultures and child-rearing practices while keeping child safety at the forefront.
- Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour toward children.
- Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and ensure high-quality staff, volunteer supervision, and professional development.
- Ensure children know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe, encouraging, and facilitating such discussions.

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1A
Release Date: 12 February 2020	Uncontrolled if Printed	Page 1 of 5

CHILDREN AND OTHER VULNERABLE PERSONS PROTECTION OPERATIONAL POLICY



- Report suspected abuse, neglect, or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities.
- Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations when the safety and wellbeing of children are at risk.
- Communicate regularly with families and carers, valuing their input and involvement in ensuring child safety and wellbeing.

PRINCIPLES OF WORKING WITH CHILDREN

The following principles apply when working with children:

- A child is defined as a person under the age of 18.
- We acknowledge that abuse can have serious and long-term effects on health, development, and wellbeing, and therefore, the safety and welfare of participants are paramount.
- All participants have the right to live in safety and be protected from abuse and neglect, and any allegations or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to promptly.
- Our commitment to safety applies universally, regardless of race, culture, religion, language, gender, age, disability, or sexual orientation.
- We undertake all reasonable steps to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with participants through rigorous recruitment practices and ongoing training.
- Those in positions of trust must understand their responsibilities and refrain from abusing their authority.
- All employees, volunteers, and members have a duty to raise concerns about harmful behaviour, receiving appropriate support when doing so.
- We provide ongoing child protection and vulnerable person training to all staff and volunteers to ensure a clear understanding of their responsibilities and to support them in their roles.

FORMS OF ABUSE

There are five main forms of abuse, although there are variations within these.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

This involves deliberate physical harm; it includes hitting, shaking, throwing, squeezing, burning, and biting as well as giving alcohol, inappropriate drugs, or poisonous substances. It also includes attempted suffocation or drowning.

SEXUAL ABUSE

This involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening and involves the use of these persons by adults to meet their own sexual needs. This could include direct sexual activity, penetrative or non-penetrative acts, masturbation, taking indecent photos or videos or showing pornographic material or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

NEGLECT

This involves the failure to meet the child or vulnerable persons physical and/or psychological needs and is likely to result in the serious impairment of the individuals' health or development. It may involve a failure to provide food, warmth, clothing, love affection, attention and recognition or a failure to protect the individual from physical harm or danger or a failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

This involves the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child or adult with a disability such as to cause a severe and adverse effect on the individuals' emotional development. As well as a persistent lack of love and attention, this includes constant criticism, threats, taunting and words and actions that demean the individual. Within a support setting it may include the persistent putting down of the individuals' ability or work. It may involve conveying to the individual that they are worthless or unloved or inadequate. It may involve causing the individual to feel frightened or in danger or the exploitation or corruption of the individual. There is some level of emotional abuse in all types of abuse, but it can also occur alone.

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1A
Release Date: 12 February 2020	Uncontrolled if Printed	Page 2 of 5

BULLYING

This is deliberate, hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. Bullying can be verbal, written, or physical.

HANDLING DISCLOSURES OR SUSPICION OF HARM

Our staff undergo training on how to respond when a child discloses harm. A disclosure of harm occurs when someone, including a child, informs a staff member about harm or potential harm to a child. Disclosures may begin with phrases such as:

- 'I think I saw...'
- 'Somebody told me that...'
- 'Just think you should know...'
- 'I'm not sure what I want you to do, but...'

Staff are required to act swiftly in the best interests of the child or young person upon receiving a disclosure of harm, regardless of the alleged source.

GUIDANCE FOR DEALING WITH DISCLOSURE

Staff receive training in managing disclosures and suspicions of harm, including:

- Remaining calm and listening attentively, actively, and non-judgmentally.
- Ensuring privacy for the conversation.
- Encouraging the child to share using their own words and asking just enough open-ended questions to act protectively.
- Avoiding leading questions that suggest answers.
- Informing the child/youth that the disclosure cannot remain secret, and that help must be sought.
- Documenting the disclosure clearly and accurately, including relevant details such as dates, times, locations, and people present.
- Avoiding attempts to investigate or mediate outcomes.
- Following all relevant processes for reporting harm disclosures.
- Determining whether reporting to the Queensland Police Service or Child Safety is necessary.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FORMING A REASONABLE SUSPICION

When forming a reasonable suspicion about harm to a child, considerations include:

- Any observable or likely detrimental effects on the child's body or psychological/emotional state.
- The nature, severity, and likelihood of the harm continuing.
- The child's age (as per section 13C of the Child Protection Act 1999).

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1A
Release Date: 12 February 2020	<i>Uncontrolled if Printed</i>	Page 3 of 5

CHILDREN AND OTHER VULNERABLE PERSONS PROTECTION OPERATIONAL POLICY



RESPONDING TO SUSPICIONS OF HARM

When suspicions of harm arise, involved managers may:

- Remain alert to warning signs or indicators.
- Pay close attention to changes in the child's behaviour, ideas, feelings, and language.
- Make accurate, non-judgmental written notes of observations.
- Assure the child they can come to talk when needed and that they will be listened to and believed.
- Follow relevant processes for reporting suspicions of harm and consider support services for the family if the concern does not meet the threshold for mandatory reporting.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Implementing and monitoring specific risk management strategies outlined in the Risk Management Strategy framework for children and adults with disabilities includes:

- Ensuring that all employment practices minimise risk by requiring a valid Working with Children Check from all employees, conducting a detailed application process, interviews and reference checks for all prospective employees.
- Providing detailed onboarding to all new employees, which includes information on the prevention of abuse and neglect, reporting procedures and staff expectations.
- Providing regular supervision to all employees as a means to identify training and skill development requirements and to ensure that employees maintain ARC's expected standards.
- Implementing and maintaining various registers and forms to effectively monitor and manage the protection of children who receive services from ARC.
- Enforcing a Code of Conduct, which employees receive and sign upon commencement of employment
- Providing a 24-hour on call service accessible to all employees for support or advice regarding any concerns, queries, or incidents related to the protection of a child.
- Accessing a range of resources and information in relation to protection of a child.

MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

ARC will record any incidents or concerns related to the protection of a child and prepare appropriate reports or referrals as legally required. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times, and any concerns or patterns that emerge will be dealt with appropriately.

Feedback will be sought from participants on all aspects of protection in relation to supports with children. The Management and Coordination team also carries out unannounced visits on employees whilst at work at unspecified times and days ensuring compliance of the protection policy.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK

The Human Resources Team will record and update information, per blue card system requirements, as follows:

- Record the details of engaged persons Working with Children check in our electronic system.
- Providing training to staff in the procedural requirements of reporting and protecting children.
- Utilise our electronic system to monitor checks due for renewal and provide support for applicants to undertake their renewal applications within the appropriate timeframe.
- Refer to any change in police information immediately to Blue Card Services.

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1A
Release Date: 12 February 2020	Uncontrolled if Printed	Page 4 of 5

CHILDREN AND OTHER VULNERABLE PERSONS PROTECTION OPERATIONAL POLICY



- Take prompt action when a staff member or volunteer is issued with a negative notice, has their blue card suspended/cancelled, or has their application withdrawn
 - These people will not be allowed to work with children and will have their employment or engagement status reviewed

Note: Staff and volunteers must inform ARC if they have had a change in police information (they are not required to advise the specifics of that change, only that a change has occurred), and the organisation will provide notification to Blue Card Services.

DATA PROTECTION

Any information regarding the protection of a child will be stored in a secure place and there will be limited access to this information. Information relating to any disclosures will be documented and submitted to the NDIA Quality and Safeguards Commission; the Commission for Children and young people and child guardian; or police as appropriate.

CONTACTS

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission	1800 035 544
Department Child Safety	1300 684 062
Kids Helpline	1800 551 800
National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline	1800 880 052
Police	000
Crisis Care	1800 177 135

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Human Resource Management Policy
- NDIS Worker Screening Policy
- Working with Children Policy
- Violence, Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Discrimination Policy

REFERENCES

- Child Protection Act 1999 (Queensland)
- Children Protection (offender Reporting) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2017 (Queensland)
- Children Protection Reform Amendment Act 2014 (Queensland)
- Children Protection Reform Amendment Act 2017 (Queensland)
- Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Queensland)
- Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011 (Queensland)
- [Blue Card Risk management Strategy](#)
- [Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors](#)
- [Department of Children, Youth Justice, and Multicultural Affairs.](#)
- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons](#)
- [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#)

AUTHORISATION

This Policy is approved and issued by:

BENJAMIN KEAST

Chief Executive Officer

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1A
Release Date: 12 February 2020	Uncontrolled if Printed	Page 5 of 5