

## Education and development

*Organisations should take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children and young people from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in their care. (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19.1)*  
[12]

National Principle 7 Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training



- 7.1 Staff and volunteers are trained and supported to effectively implement the organisation's child safety and wellbeing policy.
- 7.2 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people.
- 7.3 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm.
- 7.4 Staff and volunteers receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people.

## Indicators of harm

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The Department has an opportunity to recognise signs of harm to children and young people early and respond accordingly, whether working one-on-one or with families and caregivers.

For support identifying what constitutes a safeguarding concern to a child or young person, workers will be able to refer to the Department's child safety and wellbeing protocols and guidelines.

Identifying a safeguarding concern to a child or young person may be determined from a variety of sources including:

- a disclosure made by a child, young person, their family or caregiver, an external agency, or any other person
- a suspicion or belief that abuse or harm has occurred or is likely to occur
- the Department's consumer complaints and feedback processes
- the Department's child safety and wellbeing monitoring and review processes
- the Department's safety and quality monitoring and review processes
- alternative review systems, such as internal audit, accreditation processes or review of medical records, and
- any action or inaction that demonstrates non-adherence to the Department's child safety and wellbeing policies and other related documents.

The National Principles outline that a child safe organisation ensures workers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe. Workers have a crucial role to play in protecting children and young people from harm or abuse. They may be the best-placed, or only, adult in a child or young person's life who is able to identify and respond to signs that they are impacted by or at risk

of harm, or that a person may be a perpetrator of child abuse.

Workers are positioned to identify and respond to potential harm and may observe something during their work that raises concerns about the safety of a child or young person.

A single event, a series of events over time, or an accumulation of behaviours and circumstances may indicate harm to a child or young person. It is important to maintain an organisational culture that remains open to the impacts of cumulative harm to children and young people. Children and young people may not always be able to verbally disclose when harm has occurred. [109] [110]

Workers have a duty of care to avoid acts or omissions that could expose a child or young person with whom the Department is involved to a reasonably foreseeable risk of injury. This means that workers must prioritise and protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people through understanding the nature and risks of harm to children and young people and taking deliberate steps to reduce or eliminate risks.

The Department will provide information, ongoing education and training for workers to help them develop awareness and insights into their attitudes towards children and young people, and hold a contemporary understanding of child development, safety, and wellbeing.

Workers will be supported to have a sound knowledge of children and young people's rights and enabled to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people. They will be able to prevent harm and respond in culturally appropriate and effective ways to children,

young people, their families and caregivers and support their colleagues.

The Department's child safety and wellbeing policy directives will support workers to better understand and recognise these indicators and provides linkages to best practice information, including:

- understanding what constitutes harm to children and young people
- recognising and understanding the indicators of child harm, including harm caused by other children and young people
- understanding the rights of children and young people and recognising indicators that may detriment the rights and wellbeing of children and young people, and
- further education and resources about the indicators of child harm and the rights and wellbeing of children and young people.

## Disclosures

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Disclosure enables all workers to undertake protective action to address harm to children and young people, and minimise the risk of future harm.

Disclosure also allows the Department to make changes to ensure harm does not occur in future. It provides an opportunity to address the risk factors that enable harm to children and young people to occur and accountability for critical failings.

The Department is committed to creating conditions that empower, encourage, and support children and young people to disclose where: [111]

- safe adults are available and accessible for children and young people
- children and young people are given opportunities to raise and discuss concerns
- children and young people can access sexual abuse prevention programs and information about sexual abuse
- children and young people are taught to support peers, and
- children and young people are provided with appropriate supports to communicate abuse.

The Department acknowledges the conditions that encourage and support victims/survivors to disclose and seeks to embed these conditions wherever possible. Safe environments for disclosure must consider the diverse needs and circumstances of

children and young people in order to uphold the principles of inclusion and accessibility. [111]

Speaking up is difficult for anyone, but it can be particularly hard for children and young people. Children and young people are most likely to disclose their experience of harm to peers and adults they trust. It is vital that children and young people have access to safe adults, and especially important for children and young people who are separated from their families and caregivers.

Workers will be trained and confident in facilitating an environment where children and young people are encouraged and supported to disclose and be listened to and believed. [112]

Appropriate responses to disclosure are critical. An inappropriate response to disclosure can affect a child or young person's willingness to disclose again, exacerbate the impacts of the harm experienced, and allow it to continue. Failing to act on a disclosure may also put other children and young people at risk of abuse. [113]

Workers will be assisted to create a safe, supportive environment for children, young people, and victims/survivors to express their views and concerns through the Department's child safety and wellbeing

policy directives. These resources will assist workers to be aware of, and open to, different ways children, young people, and victims/survivors might disclose to

ensure that they are supported, made safe, and believed even following tentative, unclear, or partial disclosures. [114]

## Supporting children and young people

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While some workers are expected to support and listen to children and young people when they raise concerns, it may not be within their scope to counsel or investigate a disclosure made by a child, young person or victim/survivor.

The Department's Child Safety and Wellbeing Service, Child Safety Services, and Tasmania Police are responsible for investigating reported safeguarding concerns.

A range of health professionals, internal and external, are skilled in providing medical, psychological, and other support when required. Responses to child safeguarding concerns will be trauma-informed and culturally safe.

The Department recognises that making a report does not necessarily conclude its duty of care to a child, young person, their family or caregiver. It is essential that any child or young person harmed while receiving care/services will receive appropriate care, support, and information, including additional care at no expense to themselves or their family/caregivers. When a child or young person makes a disclosure, it is

an opportunity for workers to provide immediate support and comfort, and to assist in protecting the child or young person from harm. Workers can also continue to respond to the needs of a child or young person by helping them connect to professional services that can keep them safe, provide support and facilitate their recovery from harm.

The Department's child safe approach and associated resources support children, young people, their families, and caregivers to access information on internal and external support services and complaint processes, including prevention programs. Workers are also supported to assist children, young people, their families, and caregivers to access, understand and use these services through ongoing guidance, education, and training.

## Supporting workers

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Safeguarding concerns can be traumatic for everyone involved. It is important that workers involved in or affected by an event have access to care and support in accordance with the Department's child safety and wellbeing policy directives.

This may include support from the Child Safety and Wellbeing Service or external assistance programs

where needed, such as the Department's confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Workers are encouraged to seek support if they feel they need additional support after receiving or being involved in a safeguarding concern.

## Child safe capability framework

The Department seeks to make all workers aware of and comply with the National Principles and their commitment to child safety and wellbeing and child safe approach when providing services to children and young people and/or their family or caregivers.

The following topics will constitute the capability framework:

- children and young people's rights and wellbeing
- safeguarding and identifying and responding to concerns
- child-safe culture and governance
- risk-management strategies
- participation and empowerment
- child safe behaviours
- reporting obligations
- education and prevention, and
- responsive care and support.

The Department will work in conjunction with services to provide resources to support child safety and wellbeing in practice in accordance with the National Principles, and actively promote the dissemination of information about child safe practice to workers.

The aim is to ensure workers feel supported and confident in communicating and working with children in a way that is safe, empowering and encourages their participation in creating an

organisation that is safe. Workers will be supported through ongoing education and awareness, training, and functional systems to know, understand, and practice child safe behaviours and boundaries with confidence and competence.

The Department's implementation of the National Principles will be regularly monitored, reviewed, and improved, including continuous quality improvement in promoting the safety of children, reducing risk, preventing abuse, and responding to allegations of child abuse.

Targeted induction, training, and supervision will be provided to ensure workers understand their obligations to protect children, identify child abuse risks and prevent, detect, and report any inappropriate behaviour, misconduct, or suspected child abuse. Local systems and processes are in place to support this, and workers will be trained in how to use the systems to support effective implementation of the child safe approach.

All sections of the Department are expected to provide child safety and wellbeing education and training as part of professional development programs. They should maintain a focus on safeguarding, with these expectations encompassed in performance and professional development conversations and agreements where relevant to the scope of practice.

Education and training should prepare and equip workers with the skills to confidently implement the child safe approach and may include further training around indicators of child maltreatment, responding to disclosures, mandatory reporting, and open disclosure, amongst others.