



PROVIDER CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING CODE OF CONDUCT AND POLICY

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A. Main points

- At Rural Children's Therapy Pty Ltd, we are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Workers are expected to comply with our general **Code of Conduct for Workers** at all times, including in relation to interactions with children and young people.
- **Purpose:** The purpose of this more specific Code and Policy is to:
 - demonstrate our commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people;
 - inform all leaders and workers (including contractors and volunteers) of their obligations to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children; and
 - instil child safety as an organisational priority across all levels, areas and activities of our organisation.
- **Child safety is our paramount concern.** Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children is our highest priority as an organisation. To this end, our owners, directors, and management have reviewed, accepted and adopted the:
 - National Principles for Child Safe Organisations published by the Australian Human Rights Commission (the **National Principles**); and
 - Child Safe Standards made by the Office of the Children's Guardian in New South Wales (the **Standards**).
- **To whom does this Code and Policy apply?** We expect and require all workers and others who conduct work for us in paid or unpaid capacities – including, without limitation, board members, executive leadership,



employees, contractors, volunteers, interns, trainees and consultants – to review, accept, adopt, and adhere to the National Principles, the Standards and this Code and Policy at all times.

- **To what does this Code and Policy apply?** This Code and Policy applies to all activities that involve, result in, or relate to, contact with children, including physical contact and contact online.
- **Who is responsible for implementing and reviewing this Code and Policy?**
 - This policy was commissioned and approved by our leadership team and endorsed by the board and the executive. It forms an important part of our **Risk Management System**.
 - Our Child Safety Officer is Jemimah McPherson. The Child Safety Officer is primarily responsible for:
 - implementing and leading the regular review and improvement of this Code and Policy;
 - helping workers and others to understand what is required, e.g. in the context of recruitment;
 - training staff on child safety at induction;
 - regular training, supervision and support of workers around child safety issues;
 - investigating, managing and responding externally to any feedback, complaints or incidents related in any way to child safety. The Child Safety Officer reports directly to senior management and the board on child safety matters;
 - record-keeping, including evidence of working with children checks and training;
 - working closely with the **Complaints Officer** in relation to any complaints or feedback received from or in respect of children including any complaints or feedback relating to child safety, including pursuant to our **Complaints Management and Resolution Policy**; and
 - working closely with our **Incidents Officer** and senior leadership in relation to any external reporting and information sharing requirements, including pursuant to our **Incident Management and Reportable Incidents Policy**.



- Managers who are hiring new workers (including contractors or volunteers) are responsible for ensuring that recruitment highlights the child safety requirements and that new workers have clearance to work with children before starting work with us, including pursuant to our **Worker Screening Policy**; and for ensuring working with children checks are sent to the Child Safety Officer for record-keeping and compliance audit purposes.
- Each worker **must** comply with this Code and Policy, including, without limitation, ensuring that their working with children checks remain current.
- This Code and Policy tells workers what we need them to be, and how we need them to act, to comply with the National Principles and the Standards. It is to be read with our general Code of Conduct.
- In preparing this Code and Policy, we looked at The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, relevant Commonwealth and State/Territory legislation or regulations (including legislative requirements for working with children checks and mandatory reporting), the National Principles and the Standards.
- Some of our workers, including registered and unregistered health professionals, must also comply with other professional codes (e.g. codes made by National Boards, self-regulatory bodies, and/or AHPRA), and other legal requirements (e.g. under statutory codes of conduct or under child protection and mandatory reporting laws). These workers must also comply with those codes when working with us.
- To make this Code easier to read and to understand:
 - “**child**”, and “**young person**” means a person younger than 18 years of age;
 - “**clients**” means people to whom we provide services, products and/or supports and includes, without limitation, people with disabilities who seek or receive services, products and/or supports from us;
 - “**cultural safety**” means providing quality care that fits with the familiar cultural values and norms of the person accessing the service, that may differ from your own, the provider’s, and/or the dominant culture;
 - “**mandatory reporting**” means a legislative requirement imposed on a person or organisation to make a report to a government agency or



other organisation in relation to a concern about a child's safety including, without limitation, concerns around physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, psychological harm;

- **“provider”** means us;
 - **“workers”** means all workers employed or otherwise engaged by us to deliver services and/or supports to clients and includes (but is not limited to) our employees, key personnel, contractors, agents and volunteers;
 - we will refer to each of our workers as **“you”** in this document. If you work with or for us, you should assume that this Code applies to **you**; and
 - **“colleagues”** means other workers.
- If, with respect to a worker, there is a conflict between this Code (on the one hand), and any statutory, self-regulatory or professional code or rule that applies to the worker (on the other hand), the statutory, self-regulatory or professional code or rule prevails to the extent of any inconsistency.
 - If you have any questions about this Code and Policy, please speak with the Child Safety Officer.
 - **Review:** The Child Safety Officer, reporting to our leadership team, will lead a review of his Code and Policy at least annually with a view to improving it.



B. What we expect from you: key principles

The National Principles set minimum expectations designed to shape our behaviour and culture when it comes to working with children and young people. The following principles are non-negotiable requirements for working with and for us.

If you disagree with any of these principles, we do not want you to work with us. We will treat any breach of these principles very seriously, including by applying our Complaints Management and Incident Management Policies to investigate and, if warranted, to take further disciplinary and other actions, as appropriate.

(1) Child safety and wellbeing is part of our DNA and culture.

Everything we do or plan to do that involves contact with children must include conscious consideration of child safety and wellbeing principles.

This document is publicly available, including to all our clients and families, and the community generally.

This document forms an essential part of our **Risk Management System**, and is to be read with our **Code of Conduct for Workers**, our **Complaints and Feedback Management and Resolution Policy**, our **Worker Screening Policy**, and our **Incidents and Reportable Incidents Policy**.

(2) Children and young people must be informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them, and be taken seriously.

Children have a right to be safe on our premises and when interacting with us in any way. You are responsible for helping to make children and young people feel welcome when working with us. This includes:

- introducing yourself by name;
- helping to create a friendly and welcoming environment; and
- informing children and young people about their own role in helping them to staying safe while on our premises (e.g. to risks associated with running or stairs).



Children have a right to be listened to. If a client is a child without legal capacity to make his or her own decisions, families and other supporters play an important role in making decisions about services and supports. However, as a child grows up, they should be involved in decisions that affect them. Even for very young children, you should pay close attention to the signs (verbal and nonverbal) children may give to communicate their feelings, ideas and wishes.

In some States and Territories, certain mature children are deemed to have legal capacity to make some decisions, and you should consult with key personnel – including the Child Safety Officer - to discuss how best to give effect to such decisions on a case-by-case basis.

You should treat children clients with respect and listen to their views, and encourage and answer questions to the best of your abilities. You should welcome and document children's suggestions, including in relation to their ideas to improve their safety.

You must and remain alert to children who may be at risk and be aware of your mandatory and other legal reporting obligations.

We use resources created by the Australian Human Rights Commission to educate and engage workers about children's rights, engaging with young people, safe environments, strategies for staying safe and seeking help when needed.

We encourage children to share their views and feedback with us and to participate in decision-making around safety and wellbeing issues.

(3) Families and our communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

We are family-centred and recognise that families are primarily responsible for the upbringing of their children. We recognise that families come in a variety of structures, and that family members play different roles in their children's lives, based on their circumstances, backgrounds and cultures. We also recognise that families and carers are best placed to advise us about their children's needs and can inform us about practices and environments that are safe for them. We respect the cultures and identities of children, young people, families, and community members, and seek to partner with them to ensure children are safe.



We are open with families about our approach to child-safety, and make this Code and Policy available to them, and to our community generally. We also welcome feedback on our policies and procedures relating to child safety.

We involve families as partners when reviewing this Code and Policies. As explained in our Code of Conduct for Workers, we do not provide services to children without parental consent.

(4) We uphold equity and respect diversity

When working with children, our work is child-centred. We look for and celebrate the strengths of every child we work with. We treat children with respect and treat everyone equally regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, social or cultural backgrounds. We train workers to respond to children and your people with diverse backgrounds and needs.

Our policies on accessibility, anti-discrimination, cultural safety, diversity and inclusion are set out in our Code of Conduct for Workers.

We treat everyone equally. We do not discriminate against anyone based on sex, gender, sexuality, race, religion, culture, language, disability, socio-economic status, or age.

We seek to create an environment that is safe and welcoming for everyone. We do not tolerate bullying or abuse of children and young people.

(5) People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice

All recruitment efforts (including advertising, referee checks and volunteer screening) emphasise child safety and wellbeing.

We pre-screen all workers and volunteers in accordance with our **Worker Screening Policy**, including requiring clear working with children checks before any worker or volunteer has contact with any child.

Clearance to work with children is a selection criterion and contractual condition of employment for all our workers. All workers are required to



maintain current working with children checks in the jurisdiction(s) in which they work.

Induction training includes training workers on this Code and Policy, including worker's record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.

Ongoing supervision of workers focuses on child safety and wellbeing.

We have a range of tools to manage and mitigate child safety risks.

(6) Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused

We have an accessible **Complaints Management and Resolution Policy** that clearly outlines the responsibilities of leadership and workers. Complaint handling procedures are outlined to all families we work with.

Complaints (including complaints received from children and young people) are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly as set out in our **Complaints Management and Resolution Policy**.

We have detailed policies and procedures in place to address the reporting of complaints and incidents to the relevant authorities, including under our **Incident Management and Reportable Incidents Policy**.

Where any concerns or complaints relate to harm caused to a child (including by another child), our Child Safety Officer liaises with our Complaints Officer and our Incidents Officer to prioritise child safety.

Our record keeping and privacy obligations to clients are set out in our **Privacy Policy**.

(7) Workers are equipped with knowledge and skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe

The Child Safety Officer trains workers on:

- this Code and Policy;



- indicators of child harm (including harm caused by other children and young people);
- responding to disclosures;
- how to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing;
- record-making and keeping; and
- building culturally safe environments for children and young people,

and on child safety generally using evidence-based practices, including resources developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

We encourage workers to disclose harm or risk to children and young people to the Child Safety Officer and to senior management. Workers who have no culpability for the concerns, actions or allegations reported will not be treated prejudicially for raising good faith concerns about child safety with the Child Safety Officer or leadership team.

Child safety is always our paramount concern. You are responsible for responding quickly when you become aware of an issue of child safety and wellbeing or cultural safety. In addition to taking any steps appropriate to ensure the safety of a child, you must notify the Child Safety Officer of any issue affecting child safety as soon as practicable.

(8) Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing (while minimising the opportunity for young people to be harmed)

Through our **Risk Management System**, we seek to identify and address physical environmental risks to child safety, including in child-to-child and adult-to-child interactions. Some of the specific steps we have taken include:

- implementing this Code and Policy;
- consideration of key risks and mitigants (including with respect to workplace safety) in our **Risk Management System**;
- [parent and caregivers are to have heightened direct supervision of their children near higher risk areas, like staircases during telehealth appointments];
- [a strong organisational preference for children to be accompanied by family members or carers in interactions with us];
- [the use of screen recording and videos to monitor interactions between workers and children];



- [policies prohibiting workers from completing online with a child alone that involves them undressing life skills, eg. showering, bathing, toileting and dressing. A parent or guardian is required to attend the sessions listed above. Please note, a therapist can work on these goals without the parent present if it does not require the child to undress eg. Reading a book about toileting; and
- consideration of child safety in relation to third party contractors and students. Parent must consent to have an allied health assistant or student unsupervised in a telehealth sessions.

We seek to identify and address online risks to child safety, including in child-to-child and adult-to-child interactions. Specific steps we have taken include:

- Implementing this Code and Policy;
- [using waiting rooms and passwords for Zoom and other telehealth interactions]; and
- [the pre-screening of all materials used in the provision of services, including videos, articles, and applications].

(9) This Code and Policy is regularly reviewed and improved

We review this Code and Policy at least annually, including by:

- reviewing feedback, analysing complaints and incidents to identify causes and systemic issues;
- convening discussions with the Child Safety Officer, the Incidents Officer and the Complaints Officer to discuss mitigants and improvements;
- updating workers on developments, including the outcomes of reviews; and
- looking at child safety indicators.

In each review, we seek to improve outcomes with practical changes, recognising that even incremental improvements can compound over time to significantly increase safety for children and young people.

(10) Policies and procedures



This Code and Policy, together with our Code of Conduct for Workers, are intended to address all of the child safe principles outlined in the National Principles and the Standards. Wherever possible:

- we use resources (including those developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission) to ensure our policies and procedures are understood;
- we monitor what similar organisations are doing to benchmark to best practice;
- we champion, at every level of our organisation, the importance of child safety and the importance of compliance with this Code and Policy and the National Principles; and
- our leaders model compliance with child safety rules – in other words, they “walk the walk” on child safety compliance.



C. Code of Conduct for workers - specific requirements:

This section is modelled closely on the example Child Safe Code of Conduct produced by the Australian Human Rights Commission, which can be found here: <https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/tools-resources/practical-tools>

All workers are subject to our general Code of Conduct. **In addition**, all workers (including contractors and volunteers) are expected to act in accordance with this Code in their physical and online interactions with children and young people under the age of 18 years.

You **will**:

- Act in accordance with our child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures at all times.
- Behave respectfully, courteously and ethically towards children and their families and towards other staff.
- Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they communicate (verbally or non-verbally) that they do not feel safe or well.
- Promote the human rights, safety and wellbeing of all children in our organisation.
- Demonstrate appropriate personal and professional boundaries.
- Consider and respect the diverse backgrounds and needs of children.
- Create an environment that promotes and enables children's participation and is welcoming, culturally safe and inclusive for all children and their families.
- Involve children in making decisions about activities, policies and processes that concern them wherever possible.
- Contribute, where appropriate, to our policies, discussions, learning and reviews about child safety and wellbeing.
- Identify and mitigate risks to children's safety and wellbeing as required by our risk assessment and management policy or process.
- Respond to any concerns or complaints of child harm or abuse promptly and in line with our Complaints Management and Resolution System Policy.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report all suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse as required by mandatory reporting legislation in the State(s) in which you work and by our policy and procedure on internal and external reporting. • Comply with our protocols on communicating with children. • Comply with mandatory reporting laws in the places we work and our policies and procedures on record keeping and information sharing.
<p>You will <u>NOT</u>:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in any unlawful activity with or in relation to a child. • Engage in any activity that is likely to physically, sexually or emotionally harm a child. • Unlawfully discriminate against any child or their family members. • Be alone with a child unnecessarily. • Arrange personal contact, including online contact, with children you are working with for a purpose unrelated to our activities. • Disclose personal or sensitive information about a child, including images of a child, unless the child and their parent or legal guardian consent <u>in writing</u> or unless you are required to do so by law and/or by our policy and procedure on reporting. • Use inappropriate language in the presence of children, or show or provide children with access to inappropriate images or material. • Work with children while under the influence of alcohol or prohibited drugs. • Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse.
<p>If you think this Code of Conduct has been breached by another worker or other person in our</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act to prioritise the best interests of children. • Take actions promptly to ensure that children are safe. • Subject to the next sentence, promptly report any concerns to your manager and our Child Safety Officer. If, however, a concern or allegation involves either your manager or the Child Safety Officer,



organisation, you will :	<p>you must report your concerns to our Chief Executive Officer or any director of our organisation so that the concern or allegation can be investigated independently and efficiently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow our Complaints Management and Resolution System Policy.• Comply with mandatory and other legislative requirements on reporting if relevant, and with our policy and procedure on internal and external reporting.
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<p>You agree to abide by this Code of Conduct while working with us.</p> <p>You understand that breaches of this Code of Conduct may lead to disciplinary action or termination of your work relationship with us.</p>	 <p>Signature</p> <p>Jemimah McPherson Full Name</p> <p>27/03/2023 Date</p>
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Status of this Document

This Code is intended to be read with, and to supplement, this provider's Code of Conduct for Workers as well as general principles of professional conduct.

Distribution of this Document

This Code forms part of the provider's compliance system. A copy is provided to every worker; and anyone else who wants a copy of it.

