

Safeguarding Principles Framework



About this framework

The Safeguarding Principles highlight the essential framework required in organisations to ensure the safety, protection, and wellbeing of all service users. They also capture the specific requirements related to ethical, legislative, and regulatory responsibilities for the reporting of harm and abuse against children, young people and adults experiencing vulnerability.

This document can be used as a practice review tool but is primarily designed to drive the increased sharing and collaboration of Network expertise and resources via the establishment of a Network Resource Portal. This is a key part of the Anglicare Australia Safeguarding Project, which through collaboration, supports the collective improvement of quality safeguarding practices and cultures for children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

Definitions

Safeguarding

A term widely used within the Human Services context that seeks to protect the human rights, safety, health, and wellbeing of people to ensure lives are free of abuse, harm, neglect, and exploitation- most particularly children, young people and adults experiencing vulnerability.

Vulnerable children and young people

All children and young people may be considered as vulnerable to abuse and harm due to the significant power imbalance they experience generally with adults within their families, communities and the institutions they access. Children and young people can be additionally vulnerable to abuse and harm due to factors such as age and developmental stage, disability, gender, sexuality, early experiences of trauma and abuse, experiences of social isolation or lived family experiences of poverty and marginalisation.

Vulnerable adults

Adults may experience vulnerability due to a range of life experiences that are episodic related to factors such as housing instability, unemployment or underemployment, accidents, illness, mental ill- health, family disruption, family violence and drug or alcohol dependency.

For some adults their experience of vulnerability is long term and may include factors such as long-term chronic exclusion and social isolation due to poverty, long-term unemployment or underemployment, disability, ageing with physical or cognitive impairment, childhood trauma, long term exposure to family disruptions and violence, chronic health conditions including mental illness.

Acknowledgement

First Nations children, young people, their families, and communities

Embedding cultural safety into safeguarding for First Nations children and young people is critical. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission) frequently wrote in their findings that the intergenerational harm due to colonisation and the systematic forced removal of children from their families and communities, as well as disconnection from culture, significantly heightens the vulnerabilities for abuse and harm that First Nations children and young people experience within institutions and organisations. Further a lack of both cultural safety and cultural competence within institutions can further compound their experience of abuse, by actively creating barriers to their disclosures of harm and abuse as well as preventing access to culturally appropriate, trauma informed healing and care.

For further guidance to support the safeguarding of First Nations children, young people, their families and communities please refer to the following practice guidance tools. SNAICC, with the help of Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, has created two resources. A guide, **Keeping Our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety** and the **National Principles for Child Safe Organisations**, that gives practical advice on how to implement the National Principles in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities.

Principle 1. Leaders

Commitment to Safeguarding is prioritised by organisational leadership, governance, and culture.

Leaders in the organisation champion attitudes and behaviours that show they are committed to safeguarding children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

Our leaders:

- inform themselves about safeguarding requirements and articulate a vision for high quality and safe care and set clear expectations regarding safeguarding practices across the organisation.
- make statements about how the organisation is meeting its commitment to safeguarding. children, young people, and adults experiencing vulnerability publicly available through organisational communications and websites.
- create a board structure which includes a director with specific responsibility for the oversight of the organisation's Safeguarding responsibilities.
- dedicate specific financial and human resources to support the ongoing development of the organisations Safeguarding practices
- appoint an internal Safeguarding specialist/s who reports to the executive, CEO, and the board about the organisation's safeguarding performance
- ensure safeguarding responsibilities are included in all duty statements and performance agreements for staff, including senior leaders and board members, as well as volunteers and external contractors.

Governance structures are robust and support the implementation of Safeguarding policy and practice at all levels.

Clear systems are in place within the organisation that include:

- abuse and neglect reporting for children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
- transparent, fair, and efficient disciplinary human resource processes
- workforce regulatory compliance with state and national regulations.

- comprehensive incident reporting and risk management systems with built in review processes. Safeguarding should be included as a key risk within the register.

- continuous quality improvement systems linked to ongoing monitoring and review of risk management reporting.

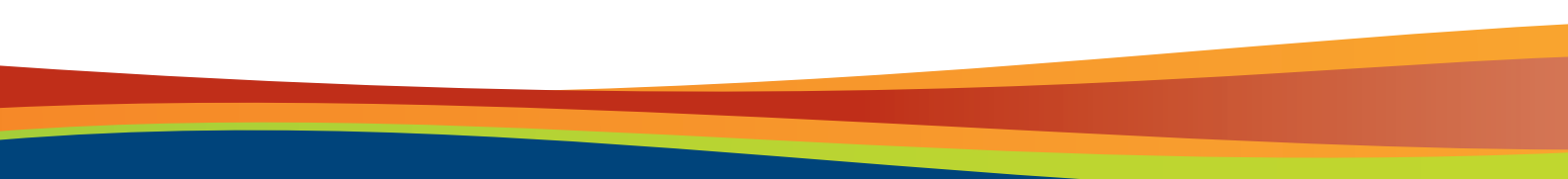
- clinical governance systems that are well organised, transparent and include safeguarding oversight and review by the organisations' executive leadership, the CEO, the board as well as external clinical governance experts.

Leaders in the organisation build a workplace culture which values and protects the human rights, safety, and wellbeing of all service clients.

We appoint leaders who:

- hold a vision for high quality, compassionate and safe care which is integrated within the organisation's vision statement, values, and strategic plan.
- expect that all staff and volunteers are committed to safeguarding responsibilities for children, young people, and vulnerable adults across all services, regardless of their specific service client focus.
- understand their responsibilities to promote broadly and provide safeguarding education, within the communities they serve.
- ensure effective organisation safeguarding policies and practices are well integrated into everyday work practices.
- value staff and volunteers within the organisation and make sure they are provided with a range of workplace supports (internal and external) and rewards/recognition, that contribute to a positive work environment.
- create and support a number of traditions, celebration events and campaigns including external collaborations with other organisations, that highlight and advocate for the rights and needs of children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
- actively seek the views of staff and service users to inform service reviews and new service development, as well as new policy initiatives.
- make certain that staff encourage children, young people and vulnerable adults, to make choices, to

the greatest extent possible, about their care and services, their community participation and their pursuit of personal interests

- engage with and celebrate the diversity of staff and volunteer views as well as encouraging and setting up structures to allow open communication across all levels of the organisation.
 - support training approaches which empower staff and volunteers with the knowledge and competencies to identify risks, prevent abuse, report abuse when it does occur and respond appropriately to support children, young people and vulnerable adults.
 - promote openness regarding service performance and ensure prompt responses to service complaints.
 - create and model a culture that is open to review and committed to learning and continuously improving. Actively avoid modelling shaming and blaming responses when managing service complaints or failures.
 - establish governance monitoring systems that ensure service sites are risk assessed from a physical safeguarding perspective to provide a safe environment for all service users, staff, and volunteers.
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Principle 2. People

Our staff and volunteers are suitably trained and skilled to undertake their role and supported to reflect safeguarding and human rights values in practice.

Staff and volunteers are carefully selected.¹

We select staff who:

- apply for positions where their safeguarding responsibilities are emphasised in advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer pre-employment screening.
- have verified identity documents, qualifications, professional registration, and relevant background experience, as well as the required Working with Children/NDIS National Worker Screening/Working with Vulnerable People and National Criminal History checks.
- are assessed during their application process as to their values, motives, and attitudes for compatibility with a culture of safeguarding.
- are recruited through a process that includes panel interviews, transparent short-listing, and standardised reference checks.
- are provided with a code of conduct which provides clear and detailed guidelines for both staff and volunteers on their expected behavioural standards and their responsibilities including specific reference to their safeguarding responsibilities.
- are required to sign an acknowledgement and acceptance of their required code of conduct. Volunteers are also required to sign and acknowledgement and acceptance of their code of conduct.

The organisation trains, supports and supervises staff and volunteers, to meet their safeguarding responsibilities.

We make certain that:

- induction training for staff and volunteers is mandatory and covers safeguarding policies and procedures for children, young people, and vulnerable adults. This includes obligations in relation to information sharing, mandatory reporting and record keeping.
- support is provided to staff with access to succinct, clearly written policies and procedures to support their responsibilities for safeguarding practices.
- ongoing regular training is provided to all staff and volunteers to refresh their knowledge of their safeguarding responsibilities.
- structures are in place which include client safeguarding as a core element of supervisory processes and team meeting agendas, as well as regular reviews to ensure staff and volunteers are implementing the policies and procedures competently and consistently.

¹ Of note: Contractors and external labour hire staff are also required to satisfy the same probity and training requirements as staff and volunteers.

Principle 3. Places

Our physical and online environments are safe, welcoming, culturally respectful and prioritise the prevention of harm; however, if the safety of children, young people or vulnerable adults is compromised we are committed to their protection and the reporting of harm, exploitation, and abuse.

The organisation focuses on identifying risks and the prevention of harm. We focus on this by:

- ensuring physical environments are safe, accessible, well maintained, and able to be well monitored.
- providing culturally safe services for First Nations children, young people, and their families.
- making sure eSafety risks are assessed, managed, and communicated when using online platforms.
- identifying risks for clients when receiving one on one care and taking practical steps to ensure everyone is safe in this situation.
- having codes of conduct that are explicit and detailed regarding expectations of staff and volunteer engagement with service clients including on social media platforms.
- having safe and welcoming services and service sites which are accessible, non- discriminatory and culturally respectful.

Our staff and volunteers report and respond to allegations of harm and abuse. Our requirements are that:

- staff and volunteers are supported through induction and ongoing training and supervision to be confident of identifying situations where children, young people and vulnerable adults are at risk of, or experiencing abuse, and are clear about their reporting responsibilities.
- the organisation has clear reporting protocols for all service types and includes requirements to report to external statutory authorities and the Police.
- the organisation provides access for staff and volunteers to internal specialists for guidance on all safeguarding concerns.

- all safeguarding concerns are reported to service leaders and recorded in an incident management system in accordance with the service specific policy and procedures
- service leaders' model open communication regarding safeguarding concerns including staff and volunteer concerns about the conduct of colleagues.

The organisation has accessible procedures for raising and responding to concerns and complaints.

We want to know when things are not going well or are unsafe:

- information about raising and responding to concerns and complaints is in clear English as well as other relevant community languages, to account for different literacy capacities.
- information about raising and responding to concerns and complaints is available on the organisation's website and downloadable
- information about raising and responding to concerns and complaints is specifically available in child-friendly formats.
- the process of handling complaints and concerns prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and adults experiencing vulnerability. Additional psychological supports are provided as required.
- staff who are subject to allegations of breaches to the service code of conduct are supported and have access to psychological supports or EAP services.
- there are clear roles and responsibilities for leadership, staff, and volunteers as well as competent governance systems to manage and record complaints
- responses to complaints are quick and thorough and relevant people are kept informed of the investigation progress, outcomes, and resolution of the complaint.
- issues of potential/actual conflicts of interest in complaint investigations are acknowledged, documented and an alternative independent investigation process is commenced.
- feedback and complaints lead to evidenced improvement in the delivery of services as well as any changes needed to the organisations policy and procedures.

Principal 4: Processes

Policies and procedures give clear guidance regarding the organisation's safeguarding policy framework and practices.

The organisation's policies and procedures on safeguarding are clearly documented and publicly accessible.

We work to provide:

- policies and procedures that are written in straightforward language.
- policies and procedures that are available in child-friendly formats.
- policies and procedures that are available on the website and downloadable.
- organisational displays of safeguarding materials where appropriate.

Everyone in the organisation knows how to apply the safeguarding policies and procedures.

To make this happen:

- the organisation has suitable review and refreshment strategies for all staff including external contracted staff, and volunteers, to ensure they are current and knowledgeable regarding their safeguarding requirements.
- team meetings regularly review and highlight safeguarding requirements.
- staff and volunteer intranets and internal communication portals include refreshers and updates regarding safeguarding practice requirements.

Each organisation's commitment to safeguarding is evidenced through having the following policy and procedures to guide workers and volunteers in the following critical essential areas of safeguarding practice:

- child and young person's safety and wellbeing.
- person centred care, safety, and wellbeing
- service users' safety and wellbeing
- mandatory reporting requirements.
- risk managing and care in lone worker service environments
- HR recruitment, selection, and retention
- complaints and incident reporting
- client engagement with service feedback and service development.
- service quality, development, and review
- staff and volunteer ongoing training, and support.
- client support and safety in response to safeguarding incidents.