

POLICY CATEGORY

Client Engagement

PURPOSE

This policy aims to ensure that all Centacare Catholic Country SA Staff are aware of their responsibilities relating to the protection, safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Centacare Catholic Country SA Staff.

DEFINITIONS

CARL - Child Abuse Report Line (13 14 78).

Centacare - Centacare Catholic Country SA.

Child - a person under the age of 18.

DCP - Department for Child Protection.

DHS - Department of Human Services.

ELMO - Centacare's Human Resource and Payroll information system.

Harm - the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA) states that any reference to harm in relation to a child means:

- physical harm or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission) and, without limiting the generality of this subsection, includes such harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect
- Psychological harm does not include emotional reactions such as distress, grief, fear or anger that are a response to the ordinary vicissitudes of life.

Mandated Notifier - all Centacare Staff are mandated to notify actual or suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect, as outlined in the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)*.

Neglect - the failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life - food, clothing, shelter, emotional security, medical care and adequate supervision needed for a child's growth and development.

Risk - the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA) states that any reference to risk in relation to a child means:

- the child or young person has suffered harm (being harm of a kind against which a child or young person is ordinarily protected); or

- there is a likelihood that the child or young person will suffer harm (being harm of a kind against which a child or young person is ordinarily protected); or
- there is a likelihood that the child or young person will be removed from the State (whether by their parent or guardian or by some other person) for the purpose of—
 - (i) being subjected to a medical or other procedure that would be unlawful if performed in this State (including, to avoid doubt, female genital mutilation); or
 - (ii) taking part in a marriage ceremony (however described) that would be a void marriage, or would otherwise be an invalid marriage, under the Marriage Act 1961 of the Commonwealth; or
 - (iii) enabling the child or young person to take part in an activity, or an action to be taken in respect of the child or young person, that would, if it occurred in this State, constitute an offence against the Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 or the Criminal Code of the Commonwealth; or
- the parents or guardians of the child or young person—
 - (i) are unable or unwilling to care for the child or young person; or
 - (ii) have abandoned the child or young person, or cannot, after reasonable inquiry, be found; or
 - (iii) (iii) are dead; or
- the child or young person is of compulsory school age but has been persistently absent from school without satisfactory explanation of the absence; or
- the child or young person is of no fixed address; or
- any other circumstances of a kind prescribed by the regulations exist in relation to the child or young person.

Staff – board directors, employees, volunteers and students on placement at Centacare.

COMMUNICATION

This child safe policy and related documents are available on request and on SharePoint. All staff are required to acknowledge understanding and accept to act in accordance with this policy within ELMO.

This child safe policy and related documents are provided to all staff as part of their induction following recruitment.

We prioritise and value the perspectives of children and young people, actively engaging them in decision-making processes when suitable. Our approach involves offering transparent explanations tailored to their age or developmental stage, emphasising their entitlement to safety and the importance of being heard. We ensure they understand their ability to offer feedback or make a complaint if they have a concern, either directly to staff or through their parent/guardian. We will listen to and act upon any complaint or concerns that a child or young person raises with us.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Staff are responsible for:

- acting in accordance with the Policy Specifics indicated in this Policy and the Child Safe Code of Conduct;
- ensuring the safety and welfare of children and/or young people is paramount at all times;
- treating all children and young people with dignity, equality and respect;
- listening and responding appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people within the organisation;

- taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people within the organisation;
- ensuring children and young people understand their rights and explaining to the child in age-appropriate language what they can expect when participating in a service, activity or program offered by the organisation;
- responding quickly, fairly and transparently to any serious complaints made by a child, young person or their parent/guardian;
- ensuring they do not take part in any unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person;
- ensuring they do not discriminate against any child or young person because of age, gender, cultural background, religion, vulnerability or sexuality;
- ensuring that they do not develop any 'special' relationships with children or young people outside of the professional relationship;
- ensuring they attend Safe Environments for Children and Young People training when advised to do so;
- ensure they attend training to understand and fulfil obligations as Mandated Notifiers and for providing a child safe environment for children and young people;
- notifying the Child Abuse Report Line as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child or young person has been or is being harmed or at risk of harm (phone 13 14 78 or notify online www.reportchildabuse.families.sa.gov.au);
- ensuring they accompany their notification with a statement of the observations, information and opinions on which suspected harm or risk of harm is based; and
- ensuring they comply with the requirements of this Policy.

Managers are responsible for:

- ensuring Staff attend appropriate training to understand and fulfil their obligations as Mandated Notifiers and provide a child safe environment for children and young people; and
- ensuring Staff feel supported to make mandatory notifications.

POLICY SPECIFICS

Centacare are committed to providing a safe environment for all children and young people. Our policy complies with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 and aligns with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

We value and respect children and young people irrespective of their abilities, sex, gender, or social economic or cultural background, and we are committed to upholding equity. Bullying and harassment won't be tolerated.

A child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the organisation, from the top down and bottom up.

CHILD PROTECTION LEGISLATION

The Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA) establishes that mandated notifiers are obliged by law to notify CARL if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child/young person has been harmed or at risk of harm and the suspicion is formed in the course of a person's work (whether paid or voluntary) or in carrying out official duties.

Section 30 of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA) outlines the application of the Act to various occupations, sectors, services, and employers. The obligations included are compulsory upon

Centacare as an organisation that provides services identified within this list. As such, in accordance with this policy, Centacare requires all Staff to notify all cases where the Staff member has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child/young person has been harmed or may be at risk of harm.

Reasonable Grounds

You may have "reasonable grounds" to suspect that a child has been harmed or may be at risk of harm when:

- a child tells you they have been harmed;
- someone else tells you (e.g., a relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the child etc.);
- a child tells you they know someone who has been assaulted (often a child is referring to themselves);
- your own observation of a particular child's behaviour or your knowledge of children generally leads you to suspect harm; and/or
- an adult victim discloses past harm and a child is in the care of the alleged offender.

Please note: The law does not require proof - the law requires that you report suspected harm or risk of harm.

RECRUITMENT

Centacare ensures that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with and safeguard children and young people through vigorous recruitment and selection processes. The following recruitment practices are in place:

- our commitment to child safety is included in all job advertisements;
- clear position descriptions that include our commitment to child safety and wellbeing;
- at least two referee checks and qualification checks on all employees;
- upon recruitment and periodically having 'Working with Children Checks' completed through the DHS; and Psychological Suitability Assessments, where applicable; and
- all staff must have a National Police clearance before commencing employment.

In accordance with the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016, our organisation is registered with the DHS Screening Unit and we link all Working with Children Checks (WWCC). All staff over the age of 14 years who will be working in a role with children and young people must hold a current, 'Cleared' WWCC issued by the Screening Unit of the Department of Human Services, provide evidence of this prior to employment and renew this every five years. We will verify the accuracy of all WWCCs in the DHS Screening Unit portal as required by law.

We will immediately contact the DHS Screening Unit when we become aware of assessable information regarding any person involved with our organisation, including any serious criminal offence, child protection information, or disciplinary or misconduct information.

TRAINING, SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT FOR STAFF

Centacare has strategies in place to supervise, train and support staff to understand our organisation's child safe environments policy, their mandatory reporting obligations, how to build culturally safe environments and their responsibilities to create a child safe and friendly environment. Our strategies include:

- Training

All Centacare Staff are required to attend 'Safe Environments for Children and Young People' training. Initially, a seven-hour training session must be attended, and then a three-hour refresher training must be attended within three years thereafter. Centacare's People and Culture team will monitor the currency of Safe Environments for Children and Young People Training for all Staff.

Staff will be notified by Centacare's People and Culture team when they are due to attend Safe Environments for Children and Young People Training.

- Supervision

All Centacare Staff receive regular line management supervision sessions that provide an opportunity for staff to focus on child safety and wellbeing. Clinical, Peer and Cultural supervision are also available to access as per the 'Supervision Policy' on SharePoint.

- Working with Children Checks

All Centacare Staff must hold DHS Working with Children Checks before commencing duties. Working with Children Checks must be renewed every five (5) years.

The People and Culture team monitor the currency of DHS Working with Children Checks.

People and Culture will notify Staff and their manager when their DHS clearance is nearing expiry, and Staff are to ensure that they complete a new application when requested.

In accordance with the Centacare Employment Screening Clearances Policy, under no circumstances can a Staff member commence or continue duties without a current, not prohibited DHS Working with Children Check.

REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO HARM OR RISK OF HARM

All Centacare Staff are regarded as mandatory notifiers. This applies whether or not a Staff member's job involves direct work with children, provided that the suspicion is formed during the course of the Staff member's work or official duties (not necessarily being work involving providing services to children).

Mandated reporters have a legal obligation to notify the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 as soon as practicable if they have a suspicion that a child or young person has been harmed or may be at risk of harm. If the child or young person is at immediate risk, report to South Australia Police (SAPOL) on 000.

Even if not a mandated reporter, any person can report harm or risk of harm to a child or young person. The individual who identifies the harm or risk of harm is encouraged to make the report to authorities and can request the support from another worker to do so if required.

All adult staff (even if not a mandated reporter) have a legal obligation to report child sexual abuse by another staff member to the police and to protect a child from sexual abuse by another staff member. Failure to meet these obligations may be considered a criminal offence.

Information about making appropriate reports of harm or risk of harm is available from the South Australian Department for Child Protection website: <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse>.

Failure by staff to report a reasonable suspicion that a child has or is being harmed or is at risk or harm

breaches this policy and may result in disciplinary action being initiated against the Staff member. Additionally, penalties apply to mandated reporters who fail to report suspected harm.

Reporting via phone

If a staff member believes a child is at high risk of harm, in DCP care, or is unsure what to report, they should call CARL instead of reporting online. Any concerns regarding harm can be reported via phone, and if uncertain, calling ensures guidance from a trained Child Protection worker regarding required information.

How do I know if my notification is deemed high risk?

- Is the child that this report concerns in imminent or immediate danger of serious harm?
- Do you suspect the child has serious injuries?
- Is this report about an infant (under 12 months) with any injury (this includes bruises for babies who are not mobile)?
- are you reporting concerns about suspected sexual abuse?
- Does your report involve a child who is abandoned or currently unsupervised?
- Has a plausible threat been made to kill or seriously harm the child or children you are reporting?
- Does my concern relate to suspected Female Genital Mutilation?

If the CARL assessment worker agrees the report meets the required threshold, they will refer it to the local DCP office for further investigation. CARL assessment workers can also refer to external agencies to support the family.

Reporting online

If the Staff member deems the child as not being at high imminent risk, they have the option to report online. This is designed for experienced and frequent notifiers. It is important to note that DCPs best practice is for online reports to take three days to process. If you are unsure whether the child is at high risk, use the phone option to report.

Following a report to CARL or SAPOL we will support the child or young person by:

- referring the child, young person or their family to other appropriate services; and
- continuing to provide a service to the child, young person and their family and monitor their circumstances.

Mandatory Notification Record Form

Following a report being made to CARL or SAPOL staff must make an internal report to management and complete the Mandatory Notification Record Form, which will be saved on the client file if it does not involve a Centacare staff member.

If a report involves a Centacare staff member, the Mandatory Notification Record Form will not be saved on the client's file. Instead, it will be submitted directly to the Senior Manager or Manager, People and Culture, who will escalate it to the Executive Manager, Services. The form will be stored in a secure file with restricted access, available only to the executive team.

WHEN A STAFF MEMBER IS ALLEGED TO HAVE CAUSED HARM OR RISK OF HARM

Subsequent to any immediate mandatory reporting requirements e.g. CARL notification, Care Concern received, or SAPOL notification as per legislation, any allegation against a Staff member for causing harm or risk of harm to a child or young person, must immediately be notified to the Chief Executive Officer via the Executive Manager, Services.

If a worker is reported to CARL or SAPOL for causing harm or risk of harm to a child or young person, the allegation is required to be brought to the attention of the Chief Executive Officer as soon as possible. It will be determined whether the staff member/alleged perpetrator is to be suspended via usual Human Resource processes from their position in Centacare pending a formal investigation of the allegation. Internal processes are unable to begin until approval is granted by DCP and/or SAPOL.

REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO GENERAL COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK

Providing opportunities for complaints and feedback ensures that children, young people and their families feel valued and respected and enables us to improve the quality of our service. Children, young people and their families are informed that they can provide feedback or make a complaint at their first appointment or as part of their welcome pack and when they join the organisation.

Centacare is committed to ensuring clients are encouraged and supported to offer feedback regarding the service that they receive. Compliments, complaints or feedback can be provided verbally to any worker or direct to management either by telephone on 1800 759 865, via our website <https://www.cccsa.org.au/contact/feedback-and-complaints/>

For more detailed information relating to our complaints processes, please refer to our Client Grievances Policy.

PROCEDURE

To uphold the requirements relating to the protection, safety and wellbeing of children and young people at all times, Staff must ensure that they act in accordance with the Policy Specifics indicated in this Policy and the Child Safe Code of Conduct.

POLICY COMPLIANCE

The Executive Manager, Services will ensure compliance with this policy.

Exceptions

There will be no exceptions to the policy.

Non-Compliance

Any breach of this policy will be treated as a serious matter and may result in disciplinary action including termination of employment.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

[Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017 \(SA\)](#)
[Child Safety \(Prohibited Person's\) Act 2016 \(SA\)](#)

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Policy – Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care
- Policy – Recruitment and Selection
- Policy – Employment Screening Clearances
- Policy – Mandatory and Program Specific Training
- Policy - Client Privacy and Access to Information
- Policy – Client Grievances
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Mandatory Notification Form
- [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#)
- [Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care](#)

POLICY REVIEW

Centacare at a minimum will review this policy and the related procedures once every five years as required by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017. We will also review this policy when:

- new or added risks are identified for children or young people, which may require a change in the policy or procedures;
- a critical incident where a child or young person has experienced harm through involvement in the organisation;
- concerns are raised by anyone involved in your organisation about child safety or welfare in the organisation;
- awareness or compliance to the child safe policy and/or procedures is low; and/or
- legislative changes/requirements are made.

We will lodge a new child safe environments compliance statement with the Department of Human Services each time we review and update this policy.

<i>Policy Name</i>	Child Safe Environments
<i>Version</i>	2
<i>Policy Owner</i>	Executive Manager, Services
<i>Date Last Reviewed</i>	September 2024
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<i>Policy Endorsed By</i>	Executive Manager, Services
<i>Signature</i>	