



**In Step
Supports**

Working With Children Policy and Procedure

Document Title	Rights and Responsibilities Policy and Procedure Manual
Document Reference	Rights & Responsibilities

Working with Children Policy and Procedure - South Australia

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that children and young people under the age of eighteen are safe, respected, and protected from harm while receiving supports through In Step Supports Pty Ltd. This policy outlines the standards, roles, and responsibilities for maintaining child-safe practices and ensuring that our environments are protective, inclusive, and respectful of children's rights.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all staff and third-party providers who engage with or may have contact with children or young people through In Step Supports Pty Ltd's services.

3.0 Policy

In Step Supports Pty Ltd is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and protective environment for all children and young people accessing our services. We will uphold the highest standards of child protection and actively embed child-safe practices in our operations.

This policy aligns with the NDIS Practice Standards, NDIS Code of Conduct, and National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. It also reflects legislative obligations under the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA), the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (SA), and the NDIS (Practice Standards – Worker Screening) Rules 2018.

In Step Supports Pty Ltd will:

- Appoint a Child Safety Contact Officer, held by the Director or delegate, to oversee compliance, respond to concerns, and support staff in implementing child-safe practices.
- Require all staff working in risk-assessed roles to complete an NDIS Worker Screening Check and provide evidence of a current, valid Working With Children Check issued by the South Australian Department of Human Services.
- Verify and record screening results in the NDIS Worker Screening Database and maintain accurate records in each personnel file.
- Ensure that staff understand and comply with mandatory reporting obligations, reporting any suspicion of abuse, neglect, or harm to the appropriate authorities without delay.
- Provide children and young people with access to appropriate support services, such as:
 - **Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800
 - **Child Wise:** www.childwise.org.au
 - **Bravehearts:** www.bravehearts.org.au
 - **eSafety Commissioner:** www.esafety.gov.au
- Support and encourage any individual to report concerns regarding a child's safety, and ensure they can do so without fear of retaliation.
- Promote early intervention and prevention strategies by embedding child safety in recruitment, induction, ongoing training, and daily practice.

- Follow our internal Statement of Commitment to guide staff and carers in recognising and fulfilling their role in safeguarding children and young people in care.

In Step Supports Pty Ltd upholds the rights of children to feel safe, be heard, and participate in decisions affecting their lives. Child safety is everyone's responsibility, and we expect all workers to act with vigilance, care, and professionalism at all times.

4.0 Procedure

4.1 When to report a reasonable belief of harm or risk of harm

Risk assessments will consider NDIS-specific child safeguarding risks, including online grooming, unsupervised access, and third-party provider risks.

For any child and young person at immediate and real risk, staff must call 000 Police immediately and then inform management. The individual's safety must be at the forefront of all actions.

It is important to always search for the cause of a change in a participant's behaviour or unexplained physical symptoms. When a participant shows one or more of the possible signs of harm, risk of harm or abuse, it must be reported immediately, even though this does not automatically mean harm or abuse has occurred.

All abuse, neglect, or harm involving an NDIS participant under 18 must also be reported to the NDIS Commission as a Reportable Incident within 24 hours of awareness, in line with the NDIS (Incident Management and Reportable Incidents) Rules 2018.

Possible signs of harm or risk of harm are when:

- a participant shows a change in behaviour or mood that may indicate they are being harmed or abused
- someone is seen behaving inappropriately toward a participant
- a participant tells staff another person is harming or abusing them
- a person tells staff they are abusing a participant
- a participant or visitor advises staff that they have observed abusive or harmful acts
- someone observes an action or inaction towards the participant that may be considered abusive or harming
- a person suspects or believes a participant is being harmed or abused

The staff member will report to the South Australian Government's Department of Child Protection on 13 14 78. Failure to report an abusive, harmful or at risk of harm situation may result in a criminal offence.

4.2 How to report

The staff member with a reasonable belief of harm or risk of harm will use the online child protection reporting system to report a less serious concern(s):

Department of Child Protection

Website:

<https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/report-suspected-harm/process-for-mandated-reporters>

The staff member will use their professional understanding and knowledge of child protection to determine when to contact the required reporting body. The Director will undertake the following:

- At the time it is determined there is a risk of harm, they will report a suspected case of child harm, abuse or neglect via a phone call to:
 - Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) - Phone: 13 14 78
 - if at immediate risk, report to South Australia Police (SAPOL) on 000
 - In cases involving Aboriginal children and young people, support is provided by Yaitya Tirramangkotti - an Aboriginal team, via the CARL number.
- All serious concerns are reported via the Child Abuse Report Line, not the website's online reporting system.

The individual who identifies the harm or risk of harm is the person who has made the report to CARL/SAPOL and is required to report internally, so Director can report to the NDIS as abuse and neglect are identified as reportable incidents.

In all cases, the relevant authority (Department for Child Protection/SA Police) will guide us on how to proceed after a notification.

Once a report is made to CARL or SAPOL, the Director is also responsible for reporting to the NDIS Commission within required timeframes. This includes completing the NDIS Reportable Incident Form through the MyNDIS portal.

4.3 Details to provide

The staff member will provide the following information to the Child Abuse Report Line:

- child's name, age, date of birth and address
- description of injury, harm, risk of harm, abuse or neglect (outline current and previous)
- child's current situation
- location of the child, parent or caregiver and alleged perpetrator
- when and how the staff member found out about the harm, risk of harm or abuse

4.4 Child identification details and context

In Step Supports Pty Ltd will need to provide enough detail to identify the child or young person and give context to your report, including:

- child's full name

- date of birth or age
- current address
- contact number
- school/kindergarten/childcare centre
- ethnicity, i.e. cultural background, aboriginal kinship group, non-English speaking
- who are the parents; do they all live in the same house; are there siblings in the house?
- alleged perpetrator's name, age, address, relationship to the child, and current whereabouts
- current whereabouts of the child of concern
- details of when the next expected contact with the alleged perpetrator will occur
- If in place, family court orders, apprehended violence orders, and domestic violence orders

4.5 Supporting a child, young person, family and staff

Our management will put support strategies in place for the child, young person and their family. Strategies will vary according to the situation, and staff will be informed, trained, and supported in implementing strategies.

Strategies may include:

- Informing the child/young person/family that they are believed. One of the most helpful things you can do following disclosure of harm or risk of harm is to believe the child or young person.
- Reassuring the child or young person that they have done the right thing by telling someone about the harm and that they are not in trouble. Give them age-appropriate information regarding what will happen next, ensuring that the adults take care of things (contact the Kids Helpline or Youth Helpline). Be careful not to make promises you can't keep, such as not telling anyone else.
- Acting protectively.
- Taking immediate steps to ensure the child or young person's safety and the safety of other children or young people who may be exposed to harm or abuse.
- Providing adequate support to meet the needs of the individual circumstances, e.g. cultural support and advocacy support.
- Provide staff with debriefing and other supports to ensure their health and well-being are supported.

4.6 Defining child maltreatment, harm, abuse and neglect

Child maltreatment is the abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18. It includes all types of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power

4.6.1 Physical harm or risk of harm

- Signs and symptoms: Bruising, lacerations, welts, rashes, broken or healing bones, burns, weight loss, facial swelling, missing teeth, pain or restricted movements, crying, acting fearful, agitation, drowsiness, hair loss or poor physical well-being.
- Causes: Hitting, slapping, pushing, punching or burning, which involves an incident that is non-accidental, resulting in pain or injury.

4.6.2 Psychological and emotional harm or risk of harm

- Signs and symptoms: Loss of interest in self-care, helplessness, withdrawal, apathy, insomnia, fearfulness, reluctance to communicate openly, choosing not to maintain eye contact, paranoia and confusion.
- Causes: Intimidation, humiliation, harassment, threatening behaviour, sleep deprivation, withholding affection, and not allowing a person to maintain their decision-making powers which lead to a pattern when repeated over time.

4.6.3 Sexual abuse

- Signs and symptoms: knowing more about sexual activities than other children their age, playing sexually, masturbating more than what's typical for their age and stage of development, refusing to undress for activities or wear additional layers of clothing, having bruising, bleeding, swelling, tears or cuts on their genitals or anus, having unusual vaginal odour or discharge, having itching or pain in the genital area, difficulty going to the toilet, walking or sitting, having a sexually transmitted disease or urinary tract infection, having torn, stained or bloody clothing, especially underwear, being afraid of being alone with a particular person or going to a particular place, becoming withdrawn, unusually reactive or begins displaying high-risk behaviours (including substance misuse), being frequently depressed, feel suicidal or attempt suicide, creating stories, poems or artwork about abuse, Having problems sleeping or starts having nightmares, Starting to wet the bed or soil themselves.
- Causes: the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend, are unable to give informed consent to, and violate social taboos of family roles.

4.6.4 Neglect

- Signs and symptoms: Poor hygiene or personal care, unkempt appearance, lack of personal items, absence of health aids, weight loss, agitation, inappropriate clothing, and lack of food.
- Cause: Intentional failure to provide basic life necessities.

4.6.5 Social harm or risk of harm

- Signs and symptoms: Sadness and grief due to people not visiting, anxiety after a specific person's visit, withdrawal, low self-esteem, appearing ashamed, passivity, and listlessness.
- Causes: Prevention of contact with friends or family, preventing access to social activities.

4.6.6 Grooming

- Signs and symptoms: Being very secretive about how they're spending their time, including when online, having money or new things like clothes and mobile phones that they can't or won't explain, depression and or anxiety, underage drinking or drug taking.
- Causes: Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit, harm and abuse them.

4.6.7 Exposure to Family Violence

- Signs and symptoms: Aggression, anxiety, regressive behaviours, hypervigilance, poor sleep, or clinginess.
- Cause: Witnessing or being exposed to domestic or family violence between caregivers or household members.

5.0 Policy Review and Feedback

This policy and procedure will be reviewed at least every two years by the Director (or their delegate) or in response to legislative triggers or mandatory reportable matters. Reviews will incorporate staff, participants, and other stakeholder feedback where relevant.

6.0 Related documents

- Code of Conduct Agreement
- Child and Young People Handbook
- Incident Investigation Form
- Incident Investigation Form Final Report
- Incident Report
- Incident Register
- Risk Assessment Form
- Risk Management Plan Register
- Reportable Incident, Accident and Emergency Policy and Procedure
- Violence, Harm, Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Discrimination Policy and Procedure
- Zero Tolerance Policy and Procedure
- Risk-assessed Role Register
- Risk-assessed Role – Employee Register
- [Child Safety Statement of Commitment](#)
- [NDIS Reportable Incident Form](#)
- Privacy and Dignity Policy and Procedure

7.0 References

- Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)
- NDIS (Practice Standards - Worker Screening) Rules 2018
- NDIS (Quality and Safeguards) Commission 2018
- The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children
- [The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989
- Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016 (SA)
- NDIS (Code of Conduct) Rules 2018