



CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENTS POLICY

Policy number	3	Version	1
Drafted by	Amanda Porter	Approved by Board on	September 2016
Responsible person	Jo Jarvis	Scheduled review date	September 2018

INTRODUCTION

Children and young people have a right to be safe and protected at all times, including when accessing services in the community.

A child safe environment is a safe and friendly setting where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. Child safe environments promote the safety and wellbeing of children.

Organisations providing a child safe environment:

- Take a preventative, proactive and participatory stance on child protection issues
- Value and embrace the opinions and views of children and young people
- Assist children and young people to build skills that will assist them to participate in society
- Are focused on the protection of children and young people and take action to protect them from harm
- Provide parents, guardians or carers with evidence of their child safe environments policies and procedures when requested.

PURPOSE

The Child Safe Environments Policy demonstrates the strong commitment of Connecting Foster Carers – SA Inc (CFC-SA) to child safety and establishing and maintaining child safe and child friendly environments. It also meets the requirements as set out in the *Children's Protection Act 1993* requiring CFC-SA to provide a child safe environment.

All children who come into contact with CFC-SA have a right to feel and be safe. We are committed to the safety and well-being of all children and young people accessing our services and this will always be our first priority.

POLICY

This policy is intended to establish a child safe environment at CFC-SA and aims to:

- Show employees, volunteers, parents, guardians, carers and children that CFC-SA is committed to the safety of children.
- Set out appropriate standards of behavior and practices for people working and volunteering with children.
- Increase employee and volunteer awareness of risks to children and the strategies in place to minimise them.
- Build employee and volunteer knowledge of how to identify suspected child abuse or neglect and respond appropriately.



Relevant history obligations for child safe environments

CFC-SA will ensure that an assessment of person's relevant history is conducted in accordance with the *Children's Protection Regulations 2010* for each person who occupies, or will occupy, a prescribed position.

A relevant history assessment involves undertaking an assessment of certain background information about a person for the purpose of determining whether the person may, if appointed to, or engaged to act in, a position, pose a risk to the safety of children. This is also known as child related employment screening.

Relevant history information requirements apply for people who perform prescribed functions as follows:

- Have regular contact with children and are not directly supervised at all times
- Work in close proximity to children on a regular basis and are not directly supervised at all times
- Have access to records relating to children in connection with child protection services, education services, health services, disability services or court orders and proceedings
- Undertake functions of a type prescribed by regulation, currently the provision of overnight care or a prescribed passenger transport service
- Supervise or manage persons who have regular contact with children or work in close proximity to children on a regular basis

Information about DCSI Child-related Employment Screening, including the screening process, FAQ's and Fact Sheets are available at www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/services/screening

Any person charged with a criminal offence must advise the Chair of the board (if a board member or CEO), or the CEO (if an employee, volunteer, contractor or sub-contractor) at the earliest possible opportunity. Failure to meet this requirement may lead to immediate action and termination of any agreement or connection with CFC-SA.

Appropriate reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect

CFC-SA aims to ensure that appropriate reports of suspected child abuse or neglect are made to the child abuse report line (CARL) **Ph 13 14 78** by mandated notifiers, meeting their legal obligation under the *Children's Protection Act 1993* to report child abuse or neglect.

Mandated notifiers need to be aware that:

- It is their personal responsibility to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect – it is not the responsibility of the employer, supervisor or chairperson
- They do not have to be able to prove that abuse has occurred
- They must accompany their notification with a statement of the observations, information and opinions on which their suspicions are based
- They are immune from civil liability for reporting their suspicion in good faith
- They are entitled to feedback on a “need to know” basis about how their notification is being dealt with by Families SA



- Failure to notify is a criminal offence and currently carries a maximum penalty of \$10,000. It is the individual who is fined, not the organisation.

It is the role of Families SA to assess the notification and determine whether departmental action is warranted. It is important to remember that child protection is everyone's responsibility and that even if a report has been made, CFC-SA may still have a role in supporting the individual, family, child or young person.

Mandated notifiers will have:

- Adequate information to help people identify children at risk of harm and procedures for reporting suspected abuse or neglect
- Knowledge of what support is available for children, employees and volunteers when a report is made
- Procedures for dealing with concerns of abuse or neglect perpetrated by an employee or volunteer.

Information about mandated notifiers and their role, including reasonable grounds for reporting, indicators of abuse or neglect, and what not to report, are available at www.families.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse/mandated-notifiers-and-their-role .

Information Sharing Guidelines for promoting safety and wellbeing (ISG)

The ISG (Appendix A) provide a consistent state-wide approach to appropriate information sharing practice wherever there are threats to safety and wellbeing. They aim to:

- Reduce the risk of different service providers adopting conflicting information sharing practices
- Increase the likelihood that the actions taken are based on a complete understanding of clients' circumstances and needs
- Respect the privacy of individuals to the extent possible when furthering the aims above.

In this way, agencies and organisations limit the possibility of working at cross-purposes to each other or missing vital details that could expose clients to harm.

The ISG summarise the legal and practical framework that supports and guides service providers in appropriate information sharing practices. They provide guidance where there are threats to safety and wellbeing, when consent is and is not given; and they outline the process and professional judgements that should underpin their decision making in both these circumstances.

The following principles underpin the ISG:

- The safety and wellbeing of people are the primary considerations when making information sharing decisions
- Information sharing decisions are made on a case-by-case basis using best interest principles and are supported by sound risk assessment
- Gaining a client's consent for information sharing is the ideal and recommended practice, except where to do so would place a person at risk of serious harm or where it is not practicable or reasonable to do so



- Working in partnership with parents and other adults to provide safe and supportive family environments directly protects children's and young people's wellbeing
- When information is shared about people, in both verbal and written communication, it is done so respectfully
- 'Respecting cultural difference' means having the same aims for people's wellbeing and safety but finding appropriate ways of achieving them
- An adult's wellbeing needs should not compromise a child's safety and wellbeing.

Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care

The Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care states the rights of children and young people who are under the guardianship or in the custody of the Minister for Education and Child Development.

CFC-SA endorses the Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care, and supports and encourages children and young people to exercise their rights under this charter.

The Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care is promoted and monitored by the Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People. Information about this charter is available at <http://www.gcyp.sa.gov.au/charter-of-rights-2/>.

Privacy

CFC-SA complies with the *Privacy Act 1988* and *Australian Privacy Principles*, which regulate the management of personal information.

AUTHORISATION

Jo Jarvis
Board Chairperson

30 September 2016

Connecting Foster Carers – SA Inc



CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENTS PROCEDURES

Procedures number	3	Version	1
Drafted by	Amanda Porter	Approved by CEO on	September 2016
Responsible person	Amanda Porter	Scheduled review date	September 2016

RESPONSIBILITIES

It shall be the responsibility of the Board to establish and maintain policies and procedures, systems of financial control, internal control and performance reporting.

It shall be the responsibility of the CEO to address key management and operational issues within the direction and the policies laid down by the Board, including:

1. Maintaining an effective risk management framework; and
2. Managing day-to-day operations in accordance with agreed standards for social, ethical and environmental practices.

PROCEDURES

Assessment of relevant history

Before a person is engaged or appointed to a prescribed position, an assessment of their relevant history is required to be conducted. Assessments must then be conducted at least every 3 years.

Any person who does not consent will not be screened, however they may not be able to be engaged by CFC-SA unless an exemption applies.

This procedure applies to any person who will be appointed or engaged as an employee, volunteer, contractor, sub-contractor or agent in a prescribed position.

A person cannot perform a prescribed function unless in the past 3 years they have obtained:

- A child-related employment screening certificate or letter issued by the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) Screening unit

Or

- A criminal history report prepared by South Australia Police

If a person does have a criminal history, CFC-SA will assess this history, and any information provided by the person, in accordance with the *Child Safe Environments: Standards for dealing with information obtained about a person's criminal history* (Appendix B) as part of a relevant history assessment.

Any decisions made will be clearly documented, based on the principles of procedural fairness, and have an overriding purpose to minimise the risk of harm to children.

The Chair of the board is responsible for ensuring all board members and CEO have a current DCSI Child-related Employment Screening or SAPOL Police Clearance and have attended Child Safe Environments (Mandatory Notification) training.

The CEO is responsible for ensuring all employees, volunteers, contractors and sub-contractors performing a prescribed function have a current DCSI Child-related



Employment Screening or SAPOL Police Clearance and have attended Child Safe Environments (Mandatory Notification) training.

All records held will be stored securely and held confidentially with personnel records or contractor agreements.

A parent, guardian or carer can make a written request to see the certificate, letter or report of any CFC-SA representative.

The cost of DCSI Child-related Employment Screening, SAPOL Police Check and Child Safe Environments (Mandatory Notification) training will be reimbursed for all existing CFC-SA employees and volunteers.

New employees, volunteers, contractors and sub-contractors will be required to provide the relevant screening assessments prior to joining CFC-SA at their own expense.

Reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect

There is a legal requirement for mandated notifiers to notify Families SA of all suspected cases or child abuse or neglect.

Notifiers may have suspicion on reasonable grounds if:

- The child tells you they have been abused
- Observations of a particular child's behavior or knowledge of the child leads you to suspect that abuse is occurring
- A child tells you that he/she knows someone who has been abused
- Someone reliable such as relative, friend, neighbor or sibling tells you of the abuse to a child

If you suspect on reasonable grounds that a child is being abused or neglected:

- Do not interrogate either the child, parent and/or suspected perpetrator or ask leading questions
- Do not investigate – it's not your role and you could taint important information or evidence
- If a child discloses abuse and/or neglect, remember to:
 - Listen carefully and support the child by allowing the child to talk
 - Reassure the child that the abuse is not his/her fault
 - As soon as possible write down in detail what the child has said and their emotional state
 - Don't make promises you are unable to keep
 - Let them know that telling someone was the right decision and that you want to help.

All reasonable suspicions of abuse or neglect should be reported without delay.

If there is a potential life threatening situation call Police or other emergency services **Ph 000** immediately and try to ensure own and child's safety.

Complete a report of the incident using the Notification Checklist (Appendix C) as a guide and speak with the Chair or CEO who will ensure that you receive appropriate support following a mandatory notification.



Information Sharing for promoting safety and wellbeing

In instances where a threat to safety and wellbeing could be reduced by adopting an information sharing approach, a summary should be provided to the Chair or the CEO to support decision making and to ensure process and professional judgement is sound.

Complete a report of the incident using the ISG Guide (Appendix D) and speak with the Chair or CEO who will ensure that appropriate support is provided throughout this process.

Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care

A link to the Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care will be made available through the CFC-SA website www.cfc-sa.org.au. All new board members, employees and volunteers will familiarise themselves with all the information presented on the organisation's website, including this charter.

Where CFC-SA engages contractors to provide services to children and young people in care, such as through crèche services, CFC-SA will ensure they have endorsed this charter by checking the GCYP website link: <http://www.gcyp.sa.gov.au/charter-of-rights-2/whos-endorsed-the-charter/>.

Where there is no endorsement, we will make contractors aware of the existence and activities of the Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People.

Privacy

Any concerns regarding privacy should be directed to the Chair or CEO to review in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* and *Australian Privacy Principles*.

AUTHORISATION

Amanda Porter
Chief Executive Officer

30 September 2016

Connecting Foster Carers – SA Inc