

Working with Children and Young People Code of Conduct



Purpose of policy

This document serves as the Working with Children and Young People Code of Conduct for Counselling& meeting the requirements of the *Children and Young People (safety) Act 2017* and the *Child safety (prohibited persons) Act 2016* to ensure safe environments for children and young people (under 18 years of age).

Aboriginal Impact Statement Declaration

Cultural considerations are a crucial part of the risk assessment process in providing a safe environment for children and young people and when responding to feedback. Counselling& is committed to working with cultural competency practices, strategies, and activities that adhere to the Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

Scope of policy

This policy applies to all Counselling& personnel working with children and young people across all settings and activities.

Definitions

Child or young person - persons under 18 years of age.

Harm – for the purposes of this Act, a reference to harm will be taken as to be a reference to physical harm or psychological harm (whether caused by any 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, that are a response to the ordinary vicissitudes of life.

At Risk – for the purposes of this Policy, a child or young person will be considered to be at risk if: 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).

Parent – includes, but not limited to a biological parent, step-parent of the child or young person or a person who stands *in loco parentis* to the child or young person

Guardian – guardian or guardians of the child or young person pursuant to an order of the court under the Safety Act

Employee – a self-employed person, a person who carries out work under a contract for services, a person who undertakes practical training as part of an educational or vocational course, or someone who carries out work as a volunteer

Mandated Reporter – the general term is applied to all employees who are legally required to report reasonable suspicion of risk of harm to a child or young person

Mandatory Reporting/Notification – the general term is applied to the process of reporting reasonable suspicion of risk of harm to a child or young person. Counselling& will be guided by the Mandatory Reporting Guide.

Code of Conduct Detail

Expectations of Counselling&

Reference to Counselling& includes all those working under its ownership.

Counselling& will:

- Ensure risk assessments are undertaken to identify and mitigate risks to child safety within its organisation.
- Implement and demonstrate supportive communication practices between themselves, children, young people, families, and other stakeholders that encourage honesty and feedback
- Empower (any) staff to listen to and act upon any concerns raised by children, young people, or their families or carers
- Ensure that the needs and perspectives of the diverse groups of children and young people in South Australia are considered when designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating programs and services
- Investigate when the Code of Conduct is not upheld

When collaborating and sharing information about children and young people, Counselling& will:

- Work with relevant statutory authorities, other state government agencies and non-government organisations to promote and protect the safety of children and young people
- Undertake consultation with PEAK bodies to ensure the sharing of information is provided in a culturally safe and appropriate manner

Expectations of personnel

Counselling& will:

- Comply with the conditions set out under Chapter 8 of the *children and young people (safety) Act*.
- Demonstrate the highest standards of behaviour in their professional and personal lives
- Report any actual or suspected incident or risk of harm to a child or young person in accordance with the Mandatory Notification Guide.
- Value and respect the contributions of children and young people in continuous improvement activities and service development.
- Ensure every decision is made in the best interests of the child or young person
- Participate in training and ongoing professional development activities to obtain and maintain the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the mandatory requirements of their roles as it relates to their interactions with children and young people
- Promote the safety of children and young people, working with statutory authorities, other state government agencies and non-government organisations as required
- Promote the sharing of information about child safety and wellbeing when working with children, young people, families and the community

When engaging with children and young people Counselling& will:

- Provide information to children, young people, families, and carers about program/service activities, their rights, and responsibilities
- Ensure children, young people, families, and carers have access to appropriate support and feedback mechanisms, including confidential complaint procedures and professional counselling and psychotherapy
- Listen to and act upon any concerns raised by children, young people, or their families or carers
- Provide feedback to children, young people and families on the actions being taken to address concerns raised

- Demonstrate understanding and valuing of diversity, being aware of their own biases, and taking steps to ensure that this does not influence their actions and behaviours

Breaches of the code of conduct

Unacceptable behaviour, which may be deemed to be a breach of this code, includes:

- Undertaking an unlawful activity with or in relation to a child
- Engaging in an activity likely to cause any physical, sexual or emotional harm to a child
- Abusing the trust of a child or young person
- Being alone with a child unnecessarily
- Arranging personal contact, including online contact, with children or young people they work with for a purpose unrelated to their work activities
- Discriminating against any child or their family members
- Disclosing personal or sensitive information about a child, including images of a child, without the consent of the child or young person and/or the consent of their parent or legal guardian (except where this required for mandatory reporting or other legal requirements).
- Using inappropriate language in the presence of children or young people
- Showing or providing children or young people with access to inappropriate images or material
- Undertaking work activities with children or young people when under the influence of alcohol or prohibited drugs
- Ignoring or disregarding any suspected or disclosed the risk of harm to a child or young person

Reporting Breaches to the Code of Conduct

All children, young people, parents, guardians of children, or young people are encouraged to report any breach of the code of conduct. To do so the following procedures are encouraged:

- Report the incident to Counselling& immediately via telephone or use the complaints and feedback form at www.counsellingand.com.au

Other avenues for reporting breaches can be made via:

- Australian Counselling Association ACA – Complaint process and ethical codes provided at: www.theaca.net.au
- NDIS complaints process: www.ndiscomission.gov.au/complaints-feedback/complaints
- Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner via www.hscss.sa.gov.au or by phone at (08) 8226 5666 or 1800 232 007 (for country callers)

Code of Conduct Review

This code of conduct will be reviewed on an as needs basis, or every three years, whichever is the earlier.