

# Child Safety and Protection Policy (AU)

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## What is this about?

This policy explains how we (Advanced Personnel Management 'APM') approach Child Safety and Protection.

Advanced Personnel Management (**APM**) is committed to ensuring the safety and protection of all persons especially vulnerable persons such as children and young people whether they are a participant, client, or an employee. In Australia, state and territory governments are responsible for the administration and operation of child protection services. Legislative acts in each state and territory govern the way such services are provided. In response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the Australian Government has developed the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework (**CCSF**) a government policy that sets out the minimum standards for child safe practices within Commonwealth entities. APM recognizes it has a responsibility to develop, encourage and implement sound organizational practices, to ensure that services are delivered, and work is conducted in a safe and professional manner with a commitment to the [National Principles](#) for Child Safe Organizations.

The National Principles listed below provide a national approach to embedding a child safe culture across all sectors of Australian society in which children are involved:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

The purpose of this Child Safety and Protection Policy (the "**Policy**") is to provide APM employees and stakeholders with knowledge, guidance and instructions on how to effectively understand APM's Policy and the adopted strategies and actions taken to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and minors. APM is committed to ensuring child protection and safety through:

- Creating an environment where all children and minors feel safe and protected.
- Placing emphasis on genuine engagement with and valuing of children's feedback.
- Creating safe work environments that reduce the likelihood of harm to children.
- Ensuring staff can identify and address any actual or suspected incidents of harm, risk of harm and abuse towards a child.
- Ensuring that staff are aware of APM's processes on how to respond to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspected harm, risk of harm or abuse towards children and minors.

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## Who is this for?

This policy is for you if you work for us as an employee (permanent, temporary or casual) or on contract in any of our divisions or business units or if you do work directed by, connected with, or for us (including contractors, subcontractors, agents and consultants).

Note: references to APM in this document includes all entities in the APM Group.

## What you need to know

The CCSF sets out the below standards and obligations for creating and embedding child safe culture and practices. As such, APM will:

1. Undertake annual risk assessments in relation to the activities of each relevant service division to identify and determine the level of contact with children and young people, evaluate the risk of harm or abuse, and put in place appropriate strategies to manage identified risks.
2. Establish and maintain a system of training and compliance to make staff aware of, and compliant with, the CCSF and relevant legislation including Working with Children Checks and mandatory reporting requirements.
3. Adopt and implement the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles).

## APM's Application of National Principles

### Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

The APM Executive Leadership Team (ELT) plays a key role in setting the ethical tone of the organization and fostering and maintaining a culture that is an inclusive and welcoming environment for children and young people. This is supported through the ELT's endorsement of APM's Code of Conduct which is upheld holistically across the organization creating a culture of accountability and transparency whilst ensuring APM staff uphold ethical and contractual standards in all dealings. APM's Code of Conduct also lists the expected behavioral standards and responsibilities for all APM staff. Information sharing and transparency is also achieved by ensuring all levels of APM staff have access to APM's policies, procedures and commitments to child safety and protection.

APM's Risk Management Plan details specific strategies for the prevention / minimization of risk of harm of children and young people.

### Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

APM is committed to fostering an organisational culture that supports children and young people's safety and wellbeing. APM staff value and respect children and young people's identity and culture and are equipped with knowledge and skills required in engaging with them and understanding their developmental needs. APM staff aim to foster and build upon children and young people's strengths and capacities in a safe and secure environment to assist them in achieving and realising their goals and aspirations. Children and young people are informed of their rights to be safe, feel safe, speak up, be listened to and to know how to raise a safety concern. Younger people, who may have concerns for their own safety/wellbeing are informed of support and contact options via APM Child Safety Posters displayed in all public facing offices and via the APM website. All APM clients (participants), are provided with an explanation of their rights to be safe and participate in decisions that affect them. Explanations on participant rights is adapted to the individual (i.e., age / language appropriate) to ensure full understanding.

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## **Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing**

APM understands that parents and carers have the primary responsibility for the upbringing of their children and that there is wide variety in the structure of families and the role different family members may play in a child's life, their backgrounds, and cultures. As such, APM holds the view that parents and carers are best placed to advise about their children's needs and capabilities. APM is committed to creating a safe environment, where children and their family members feel safe and their culture and identity are respected. APM ensures that children and minors have parent or legal guardian representation and that nominated parents or legal guardians are actively involved in decision making and are given the opportunity to provide feedback to assist in improving APM's policies and procedures, especially those pertaining to child protection and safety. APM is committed to continuous improvement and welcomes feedback. As such, APM encourages participants (including children and their nominated guardians) to provide feedback in a safe and secure manner and has a transparent and readily accessible Feedback and Complaints Process.

## **Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice**

APM recognizes that children and young people have a diverse range of circumstances and experiences. At APM all dealings with children are conducted in a child centered approach which is aimed at empowering children and young people to participate more effectively in APM's service delivery model. APM's organizational culture acknowledges the strengths and individual characteristics of children, and embraces all children regardless of their abilities, gender, or social, economic, or cultural background. APM aims to create a safe and welcoming culture where children and young people feel comfortable, and services are provided in culturally safe and inclusive ways.

APM is an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) organization and has recruitment and selection criteria along with processes ensuring that the hiring and recruitment process is open and transparent and free from bias and discrimination.

APM is also committed to reducing the risk of discrimination, exclusion, bullying, harm and abuse to all children and minors especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.

APM staff also complete training modules to ensure that all staff understand APM's zero tolerance approach to bullying and discrimination in the workplace.

APM celebrates diversity and participates in a number of projects acknowledging and celebrating diversity, such as Harmony Day, NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week.

## **People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice**

APM is committed to ensuring child protection, safety and wellbeing through all aspects of its dealings and processes. APM ensures that the best candidate is selected for the role by ensuring that APM's recruitment, selection and staff development policies are followed at all times. This includes conducting thorough pre-employment checks as well as other relevant checks, such as, National Police Checks and applicable State and Territory Working with Children and Vulnerable Persons Clearance. APM's People and Culture team have also implemented systems ensuring that Working with Children and Vulnerable Persons Checks remain current and valid pursuant to stipulated state and territory timeframes. This plays a key role in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people accessing APM's service offerings.

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APM staff also participate in comprehensive induction and onboarding training including review and acceptance of APM's Code of Conduct. APM staff also receive training and supervision to ensure they have access to information and resources providing them with relevant knowledge and tools to better safeguard children and young people from risk of harm. All APM staff understand and are committed to child safety responsibilities and processes.

### **Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused**

Children and young people are encouraged to raise concerns in a manner they feel most comfortable, e.g., via their worker, an APM child safe champion, APM's dedicated child safe phone line, dedicated email or through the APM Complaints process. APM takes all feedback and complaints seriously and ensures that feedback and complaints are investigated and responded to in a prompt manner. As such, APM is reviewing its feedback and complaints processes to ensure that they are effective and relevant to children and young people. APM's feedback and complaints processes are open and transparent to ensure that they are accessible and relevant to children, young people and their families. APM's Feedback and Complaints management process is in line with APM's Code of Conduct and ensures transparency in the method in which complaints are investigated, recorded and resolved. APM is committed to continuous improvement and will endeavor to use the investigative findings of feedback and complaints to identify and create training resources that will assist staff to recognize and respond to neglect, grooming and other forms of child harm. APM staff will also have access to information to assist in providing appropriate support to children and young people in such instances whilst ensuring all legal requirements are also met.

### **Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training**

APM understands the importance of training and further ongoing education to enable staff to build on their knowledge and skills through meetings and discussions, team training days and access to relevant publications and information sharing. This ensures that staff understand child development, safety and wellbeing. Applicable APM staff will participate in training to assist them in identifying indicators of child harm and allow them to respond effectively to children, young people and their families as well as supporting their peers and colleagues. The APM Child Safe Intranet page provides all staff with easy access to document controlled APM Child Safe policies, processes, work instructions and other resources to assist them in responding, in age and culturally appropriate ways, to children and young people disclosing or showing signs they are experiencing harm.

### **Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed**

APM is aware that an increased reliance on and use of online platforms poses an increased risk of harm for children and young people. Despite the increased risk associated with an online presence, APM understands that online resources are a valuable and important tool to assist children and young people in gaining access to education, communication channels and a wide range of support services for assistance, relief and support during times of crisis.

As such, APM staff access and use online resources in accordance with APM's Code of Conduct. APM staff also receive training relating to the safe use of online systems and websites to identify and reduce areas of potential risk including, APM Security Code of Practice, Privacy Policy, Cyber Security and other relevant training.

### **Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved**

APM is committed to continuous improvement and conducts regular review of its policies and procedures. APM will review its Child Safety and Protection Policy every 12 months and will conduct reviews to ensure that organizational policies and procedures, including record keeping practices remain current and are being implemented by staff. APM staff will also review the investigative findings and results of any related feedback and complaints and will facilitate the

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update of the Child Safety and Protection Policy, as required, to ensure that any concerns and potential risks are mitigated to reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people.

## **Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people**

APM understands its role and responsibility in reducing the risk of harm to children and young people and the importance of having a clearly documented and transparent Child Safety and Protection Policy that is accessible to all staff. APM's Child Safety and Protection Policy ensures consistent application of child safe practices across all relevant APM divisions and adherence to child safety and wellbeing principles and practices.

## **Response to Suspected Harm, Risk of Harm, Abuse and/or Neglect**

Any member of staff may directly witness or have allegations made by a child or an adult relayed to them with concerns of harm /abuse. Harm can occur in many different settings and forms and may come to light in a variety of different ways.

### **How is harm/abuse identified?**

- Direct or indirect disclosure by the child.
- Direct or indirect disclosure from someone known to the child.
- Suspicions of harm/abuse or risk of harm by those involved with the child.
- Allegations and / or direct observations or signs displayed in the child's physical or emotional behaviour.
- Direct witnessing of harm/abuse.

## **Reporting**

As a contractor and supplier of services to government departments, APM is responsible for the delivery of quality and safe supports and services. Some people are legally required to report if they suspect that a child is at risk of harm abuse or neglect to a child protection agency. These people are called mandatory reporters. Each state and territory have different laws about who is and is not a mandatory reporter. A list of 'mandatory reporters' in each state or territory can be accessed in the APM Child Safe Framework.

Whilst other staff roles may not be mandated reporters, it is APM's position that all staff have a duty of care to report any actual or suspected cases of harm, risk of harm, abuse and neglect. Incidents of serious risk of harm, harm/abuse and/or neglect of children or young people must be reported to the relevant state or territory body within 24 hours of becoming aware of the Incident.

[APM Child Safety Reporting process](#) ensures staff:

- can identify and address any actual or suspected incidents of harm, risk of harm, abuse towards a child.
- are aware of APM's processes on how to respond to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspected harm / risk of harm, neglect or abuse towards children and minors.
- understand APM's procedure for reporting and documenting Child Safety concerns and incidents.

Please note in South Australia, new legislation, which came into effect from 1 June 2022, includes the introduction of two new offences under the Criminal Law Consolidation Act - Failure to report suspected child sexual abuse (section 64A) and Failure to protect a child from sexual abuse (section 65).

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The new offences take what most people would consider a *mora*/duty to report known or suspected child sexual abuse to police, into a *legal* obligation, enforced by criminal sanctions (<https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/service-providers/news-and-events/carers/carers-news/legislativereforms-q-and-a>)

### What if an immediate response is required to ensure a child's safety?

APM staff will ensure the immediate safety of the child and contact Australian Police (000) and Child Protection Services within the State or Territory. Staff will then inform their Senior Manager who will inform the relevant Child Protection Authority and record the actions taken in APM's record management system.

## External Contacts

ACT	Child and Youth Protection Service: 1300 556 729 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and Young Persons Act 2008</li> </ul>
NSW	Department of Family and Community Services: 13 2111 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998</li> </ul>
VIC	Department of Health and Human Services: 1300 664 977 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</li> </ul>
QLD	Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women: (07) 4656 5700 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Protection Act 1999</li> </ul>
SA	Department for Child Protection: 131 478 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016</li> <li>Children and Young People (Safety) Act (SA) 2017</li> <li>Statutes Amendment (Child and Sexual Abuse) Act 2021</li> <li>Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935</li> </ul>
NT	Territory Families: 1800 700 250 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Care and Protection of Children Act 2007</li> </ul>
WA	Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support: 1800 273 889 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and Community Service Act 2004</li> </ul>
TAS	Department of Health and Human Services: 1800 000 123 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child, Young Person and Their Families Act 1997</li> </ul>

## Related Policies & Procedures

Client Aggression Policy Code of Conduct

Continual Improvement Policy Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy Feedback & Complaints Policy Health & Safety

Incident Management Policy Privacy Policy

Child Safe Organization Framework (AU)

Risk Management Framework Safeguarding Vulnerable Clients Policy

Workplace Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Procedure

## Definitions

Term	Definition / Explanation / Details
Child	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines a child as <b>everyone under 18 unless, "under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier"</b> . 2 Aug 2022
Child Protection	The protection of children from harm, risk of harm, violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect.
Child Abuse	<p>The World Health Organization (WHO) defines child abuse and neglect as:</p> <p>All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting 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.</p> <p>Definitions of child abuse and neglect can include adults, young people and older children as the perpetrators of the abuse. It is commonly stated in legislation that the term 'child abuse and neglect' refers to behaviours and treatment that result in the actual and/or likelihood of harm to the child or young person. Furthermore, such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (i.e., neglect) and commission.</p>
Client	A person who is receiving or has received a service from APM.
Code of Conduct	A code which sets out expected standards of behaviour and consequences for breaching it.
Commonwealth Child Safe Framework	The Australian Government policy that sets minimum standards for creating and embedding a child safe culture and practice in Commonwealth entities.
Customer	An agency or organisation to which APM provides a service e.g., government department, insurers, employers etc.
Entity	A corporation, government agency, not for profit organisation or other entity engaged in business activity or transacting with other entities in a business-like setting.
Incident	An unplanned or unexpected event or sequence of events that may, or may not, cause injury and/or property damage. This includes an accident or near miss that has occurred in the workplace or while performing work duties in the community.
Mandatory Reporting	The legislative requirement for selected groups of people to report suspected cases of harm, risk of harm, abuse and neglect towards children to government authorities.
National Principles for Child Safe Organisations	The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations provide a national approach to embedding a child safe culture across all sectors of Australian society in which children are involved.
Participant	A person who is receiving or has received a service from APM.

## Need more information?

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We don't expect you to know everything about this topic or be able to resolve every situation. Some things require special knowledge and support to investigate and resolve.

If there is an issue that is outside the requirements and limits of your role or you are not sure what to do, speak to your leader, report the issue in an accepted way or ask for help from a specialist team within the business.

Email the Corporate Quality team at [quality@apm.net.au](mailto:quality@apm.net.au) to ask questions or give feedback about this policy.

## How should business areas apply this policy?

Provide enough training, support and supervision for people to follow requirements.

Base guides and processes on this policy and check that people understand the global and local requirements. Have effective measures and controls to manage the risks related to this topic for your area of the business.

Have clear misconduct reporting processes and act on reports of misconduct.

## Document details

Update this document whenever requirements change and review at least every year.

Version	Change type and description	Approver role and change date
1.0	New resource	Senior Quality Project Officer, 27/10/2020
1.1	Minor update: Approval and Published	GM Quality, 29/10/2020
2.0	Minor update: New policy template	Group Practice and Clinical Governance Lead, 30/08/2022
3.0	Minor updates as a result of SA Government review	Group Practice and Clinical Governance Lead 02/02/2023