



SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

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<i>Relevant Document Reference</i>	<p>Children's Protection Act 1993 Children's Protection Regulations 2010 Department for Education and Child Development – South Australia (DECD) Department for Education and Child Development South Australia Child Safe Environments: Principles of Good Practice Guidelines for mandated notifiers and information for organisations Department for Communities and Social Inclusion Screening Unit www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/services/screening Disability Services Act 1993 Aged Care Act 1997 EHA Employee Code of Conduct Current Standard Operating Procedures South Australia Disability Services Act 1993 South Australia Aged Care Act 1997</p>

1. Purpose

The Safe Environment Policy (the policy) aims to ensure EHA's facilities are safe environments for children, young people and other vulnerable people and they are protected from abuse and neglect. The policy also aims to ensure that all relevant EHA managers and employees are aware of their duty of care responsibilities for the protection, safety and wellbeing of children at all times.

This policy will govern how systems and processes are implemented to minimise the risk of harm resulting from the delivery of EHA's services and programs including employment screening for prescribed positions. It will also assist in the reporting of suspected abuse against children, young and other vulnerable people. The policy also refers to guidance on sharing information with non-government and government agencies where there is a reasonable suspicion of harm.

2. Scope

This policy will apply to employees of EHA and all other employees involved in the delivery of EHA's services and programs to children, young and other vulnerable people.

3. Definitions

The Children's Protection Act 1993 states that **child abuse and neglect** (or harm) in relation to a child means

- Sexual abuse; or
- Physical or emotional abuse, or neglect to the extent that:
 - The child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, physical or psychological injury detrimental to the child's wellbeing; or
 - The child's physical and psychological development is in jeopardy.

Child – means a person under the age of 18.

Criminal History Screening – Criminal history screening involves obtaining information about relevant potential employees on the basis that the information deemed relevant to assessing the suitability of a person to work in a child or vulnerable person-related area. The information gathered may include details concerning previous employment and relevant experience; verification of qualifications and professional registration; criminal history information, reference checks and work history reports.

DCSI - is the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI).

Harm – in the child protection context is defined as the detrimental impact on the physical, psychological, emotional or social safety, wellbeing and development of a child as a result of the actions or inactions of another person.

Mandatory Reporting Obligation - Any person providing services to children (employee, volunteer, contractor or consultant) must report any suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child to the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion 24 hour Child Abuse Report Line (13 14 78) or online in appropriate circumstances.

Prescribed Position – Refers to a position that requires or involves prescribed functions which involve any of the following:

- Regular contact with children, young or vulnerable people (including aged care and frail aged) in close proximity (usually within earshot) on a regular basis (multiple working instances of contact of limited duration or fewer, extended and intense periods of contact which may be away from the person's usual environment)
- People who supervise/manage those in positions requiring or involving regular contact with children, young and vulnerable (including aged care and frail aged) or in close proximity to them on a regular basis
- Those who have access to personal records relating to children, young or vulnerable people (including aged care and frail aged)
- Functions of a type prescribed by regulation.

Any employee within a prescribed position will undergo the screening and assessment process prior to commencement and thereafter in accordance with the Relevant History Assessments.

Vulnerable people - refers to those who may be at risk of abuse or exploitation due to their dependency on others or experiences of disadvantage, and could include people with a disability, the frail, the aged, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, refugees, and those living in poverty.

4. Principles

The following principles underpin this policy:

- Abuse is abhorrent, illegal and must not be tolerated or ignored
- Children and vulnerable people deserve respect, care and protection
- Children and vulnerable people should know that they have the right to be safe from abuse at all times
- Children and vulnerable people are entitled to the support of a responsible person if they experience, or are at risk of harm or feel unsafe
- EHA has a role to play in fostering a safe local environment and in contributing to a whole of community effort towards the protection of children and vulnerable people from abuse and/or harm.

5. Policy

EHA is committed to the safety and well being of children, young people and other vulnerable people who access our services. We support the rights of the child and vulnerable persons in the community and will act without hesitation to ensure a safe environment is maintained at all times. We also support the rights and wellbeing of our staff and encourage their active participation in building and maintaining a secure environment for all children, young people and other vulnerable people.

EHA commits to:

- Providing a safe environment where children, young and vulnerable people feel safe and protected from abuse
- Encouraging the reporting of any incident of anti-discriminatory behaviour towards young and/or vulnerable persons to the relevant authority
- Maintaining a rigorous employee and volunteer recruitment and/or screening/selection process in accordance with the Criminal History Procedure
- Monitoring and ensuring the renewal of screening for employees in prescribed positions in accordance with the Criminal History Procedure
- Operating in a spirit of cooperation and consultation with other relevant agencies in matters concerning protection of children, young and vulnerable people from harm and abuse
- Developing, monitoring, evaluating and reviewing risk management strategies to minimise harm to children, young and vulnerable people
- Developing and maintaining internal procedures and guidelines that underpin the requirements of the *Children's Protection Act 1993* and *Children's Protection Regulations 2010* to ensure with this policy

To ensure a safe environment for children and other vulnerable people EHA will undertake the following to manage its obligations under the Policy:

- The Safe Environment policy will be communicated to all relevant employees to ensure awareness and understanding of EHA's commitment to ensuring a safe environment.
- EHA will identify and assess potential sources of harm and take steps to decrease the likelihood that harm will occur to children, young people and other vulnerable people who use our services.
- All employees will be required to comply with the code of conduct endorsed by EHA.
- EHA will take reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with and provide services to children and other vulnerable people. Applicants for prescribed positions will be screened for their suitability to provide services. Screening will involve Department of Communities and Social Inclusion Child-related employment screening, interviews, referee reports, checking qualifications and previous employment history in working with children.
- EHA will ensure that all staff working with children have ongoing support and have completed the appropriate training to enhance and maintain a child safe environment.

EHA will report suspected:

- Child abuse or neglect to the Department for Education and Child Development, Families SA through the Child Abuse Report Line: telephone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 13 14 78.
- Abuse of older people to the Abuse Prevention Program (Aged Rights Advocacy Service) on 8232 5377;
- Abuse of people with a mental incapacity to the Office of the Public Advocate on 8342 8200.

6. Review & Evaluation

Reviewed annually to ensure compliance with Department for Education and Child Development standards and effective maintenance of a safe environment.

7. Statement of Adoption

This Policy was adopted by the Board of the Eastern Health Authority on 22 June 2011.