



Child Safe Environment Policy

Commitment to the safety of children and young people

We are committed to providing a safe environment to all children and young people. Our policy complies with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 and aligns with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

We value and respect children and young people and welcome them regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, or social economic or cultural background. Bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.

Scope of policy

This policy applies to all practice and partnership owners, employees, volunteers, work placement students and contractors referred to throughout the policy collectively as workers.

All permanent workers are required to agree in writing to accept and act in accordance with the policy.

We require parties such as contractors and work placement students to accept and act on the policy as a condition of any contracts or agreements entered into by them.

Communication

This child safe policy and related documents are available to children, young people and their families on our website and on request at our practice.

This child safe policy and related documents are provided to all workers as part of their induction following recruitment.

We encourage and respect the views of children and young people and involve them in decision making as appropriate. We provide clear age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate explanations to children and young people including their right to safety, their right to be listened to and that they can provide feedback or make a complaint if they have a concern to any worker, or ask their parent/guardian to do this on their behalf. We will listen to and act upon any complaints or concerns that a child or young person raises with us.

Children and young people are:

- engaged by utilising age/developmentally-appropriate language
- considered in terms of developmental level and cultural background
- encouraged to take part in all consultations
- encouraged to take part in treatment decisions
- educated on how to care for their dental and oral health utilising age-appropriate materials

- provided feedback to encourage preferred oral health behaviours
- encouraged to provide feedback to the practice about their treatment/experiences
- given appropriate behavioural management modalities such as providing for treatment by referral to specialist clinicians
- provided a safe environment in which to express themselves
- made to feel welcome and respected
- asked for feedback on previous visits – what they like/didn't like.

Code of Conduct

Caring for children and young people brings additional responsibilities for all workers. We are responsible for promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by:

- sticking to the organisation's child safe policy at all times and taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people
- treating everyone including those of different race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes and religious beliefs with respect and honesty and ensure equity is upheld
- being a positive role model to children and young people in all conduct with them
- setting clear boundaries and maintaining appropriate behaviours with children and young people – boundaries help everyone to understand their roles
- listening and responding appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people
- being alert to bullying behaviours and responding promptly and appropriately
- ensuring another adult is always present or in sight when conducting one to one consulting, coaching, instruction or other activity
- being alert to children and young people who have been harmed, or may be at risk of harm and reporting this quickly to the Child Abuse Report Line (13 14 78)
- responding quickly, fairly and transparently to any complaints made by a child, young person or their parent/guardian
- encouraging children and young people to 'have a say' on issues that are important to them.

Workers must not:

- engage in rough physical games
- develop any 'special' relationships with children and young people that could be seen as favouritism such as the offering of gifts or special treatment
- do things of a personal nature that a child or young person can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes

- discriminate against any child or young person because of age, gender, cultural background, religion, vulnerability or sexuality.

Breaches or suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct should be reported as soon as practicable to management either in person, by telephone on 08 8178 1190, or via email at dpm@toothzone.com.au. Breaches or suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct will be taken seriously and dealt with quickly, fairly and transparently.

Any worker who breaches the Code of Conduct will face disciplinary action and depending on severity of the breach, the worker may have their employment terminated.

Recruitment

To ensure we engage the most suitable people to work with children and young people we have the following recruitment practices in place:

- our commitment to child safety is included in all job advertisements
- clear position descriptions that include our commitment to child safety and wellbeing
- face-to-face interviews that use behavioural questions to determine the applicant's knowledge of child safeguarding
- at least 2 referee checks and qualification checks

In accordance with the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016, our organisation is registered with the DHS Screening Unit and we link all Working with Children Checks (WWCC). In health organisations, all workers over the age of 14 years must hold a current, not prohibited WWCC issued by the Screening Unit of the Department of Human Services if they are working in a role with children or have contact with children. A person will be taken to have contact with a child if:

- the person has physical contact with the child; or
- is in close physical proximity to the child; or
- communicates with the child (whether orally or by written, electronic or other means).

Evidence of a valid WWCC must be provided prior to employment and renewed every 5 years. We will verify the accuracy of all WWCCs in the DHS Screening Unit portal as required by law.

We will immediately contact the Department of Human Services Screening Unit when we become aware of assessable information regarding any person involved with our organisation, including any serious criminal offence, child protection information, or disciplinary or misconduct information.

Training for workers

We have strategies in place to train and support workers to understand our organisation's child safe policy, their mandatory reporting obligations, how to build culturally safe environments and their responsibilities to create a child safe and friendly environment. Our strategies include:

- as part of their induction, ensure all workers read and understand the Mandatory Reporting Information Booklet available at: https://dhs.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/103179/CSE-Mandatory-notification-information-booklet.PDF
- child safety as a standing item on meeting agendas

- workers have access to the Department for Child Protection website at <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse>
- clinicians have access to regular professional development opportunities to build knowledge and skills regarding the safe treatment and well-being of children and young people.

Reporting and responding to harm or risk of harm

We aim to ensure that children and young people are safe from harm and risk of harm. Section 17 of the Safety Act defines 'harm' to mean physical or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission), including harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect.

Mandated reporters in our organisation are:

- dental practitioners
- other workers who provide services to children and young people
- workers who hold a management position in the organisation the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of those services to children and young people.

Mandated reporters have a legal obligation to report the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been harmed or may be at risk of harm. If the child or young person is at immediate risk, report to South Australia Police (SAPOL) on 000.

Even if not a mandated reporter, any person can report harm or risk of harm to a child or young person. The individual who identifies the harm or risk of harm is encouraged to make the report to authorities and can request the support from another worker to do so if required.

Information about making appropriate reports of harm or risk of harm is available from the South Australian Department for Child Protection website:

<https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse>.

All adult workers (even if not a mandated reporter) have a legal obligation to report child sexual abuse by another worker to the police and to protect a child from sexual abuse by another worker. Failure to meet these obligations may be considered a criminal offence.

Following a report being made to CARL or SAPOL workers must make an internal report to management.

We will be guided by the Department for Child Protection and/or SAPOL after a report has been made as to whether we can conduct an internal investigation.

If a worker is reported to CARL or SAPOL for causing harm or risk of harm to a child or young person, they will be removed from any role that involves working with any child or young person until authorities have concluded their investigation.

Following a report to CARL or SAPOL we will support the child or young person by:

- referring the child, young person or their family to other appropriate services
- continuing to provide a service to the child, young person and their family and monitor their circumstances.

We will document all information received regarding the report and store this securely in a separate file.

Reporting and responding to general complaints or feedback

Providing opportunities for complaints and feedback ensures that children, young people and their families feel valued and respected and enables us to improve the quality of our service. Children, young people and their families are informed that they can provide feedback or make a complaint at their first appointment.

Compliments, complaints or feedback can be provided verbally to any worker or direct to management either by telephone on 08 8178 1190 or via email at dpm@toothzone.com.au.

We will deal with all complaints and feedback received promptly, sensitively and fairly. We will:

- listen to the complaint/feedback
- the person receiving the complaint will make a record of it if received verbally
- advise of the time expected for an outcome
- if a worker receives a complaint, they must forward it to management as soon as possible
- management will respond to the complainant with an outcome in a timely manner
- clearly document and securely store decisions and actions taken in response to complaints and feedback
- make sure that procedural fairness is followed at all times.

If the child, young person or their family is not happy with the outcome from the complaints process they can contact:

- Australian Dental Associate SA Branch 8272 8111
- Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner 8226 8666
- Australian Human Rights Commission Online: www.humanrights.gov.au Tel: 1300 656 419
- South Australian Equal Opportunities Commission (for complaints relating to discrimination) Online: www.eoc.sa.gov.au Tel: 08 8207 1977.

Risk management

Identified risk	Actions to minimise risk
Physical contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• any physical contact must be appropriate to the delivery of services being provided• where physical contact is required, this is undertaken in a safe way by explaining why contact is required and what will happen, and asking the child/young person for their permission (or their family if this is more appropriate) before proceeding• unnecessary physical contact is not allowed
Online communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• workers must not communicate with children or young people via social media
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• children and young people are to be supervised by parents/guardians where possible

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two (2) adults to be present in treatment room at all times
Taking images of children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consent of child young person and their parent/guardian required • photographic imaging for dental treatment purposes must be restricted to oral structures (mouth, teeth, lips and jaws and/or full face including profile and front of face views) only • images are to be included with the patients dental records and must not be stored/retained on personal devices such as phones/computers
Physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain a risk register that is reviewed annually to ensure effectiveness • ensure all equipment is in good working order
Privacy and confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all documents containing confidential information will be stored privately in a locked filing cabinet (or similar place with restricted access) • digital files containing confidential information shall be protected electronically by restricting the access to only those requiring it to perform their duties • workers must not disclose information regarding any child or young person without written consent of the child, young person and their parent/guardian

Related policies and procedures

Dental Board of Australia Code of Conduct: [Dental Board of Australia - Code of conduct](#)

ADA SA Code of Ethics: [Constitution \(adasa.asn.au\)](#)

ADA Policy 2.3.1: [Delivery of Oral Health Care: Children](#)

ADA Policy 2.3.2: [Delivery of Oral Health Care: Adolescents and Young adults](#)

ADA Policy 2.3.5: [Delivery of Oral Health Care: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders](#)

ADA Policy 2.3.6: [Delivery of oral Health Care: Persons with Disabilities](#)

ADA Policy 2.3.8: [Delivery of Oral Health Care: Infants and Pre-school Children](#)

ADA Policy: 6.1.3: [Partnering for Better Health - Dentists and Patients](#)

Policy review

We will, at a minimum, review this policy and the related procedures once every 5 years as required by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017. We will also review this policy when:

- new or added risks are identified for children or young people, which may require a change in the policy or procedures
- a critical incident where a child or young person has experienced harm through involvement in the organisation
- concerns are raised by anyone involved in your organisation about child safety or welfare in the organisation
- awareness or compliance to the child safe policy and/or procedures is low
- legislative changes/requirements.

We will lodge a new child safe environments compliance statement with the Department of Human Services each time we review and update this policy.

Policy Date: 6/03/2025

Review Date: 6/03/2030