

Creating a Child Safe Environment

Policy Purpose

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) outline that children and young people have a right to be safe and cared for, no matter where they are or who they are with. Children have the right to be protected from violence, abuse, or neglect. When working with children and young people, it is important to understand children's rights and needs.

We are advocates for children and have a strong commitment to child safety and establishing and maintaining a child-safe environment. Weldon embeds the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and promotes a culture of safety and wellbeing to minimise the risk of child abuse or harm to children whilst promoting children's sense of security and belonging.

Our policy in action

Weldon has a legal and ethical responsibility to provide a safe and friendly environment where all children are respected, valued, and encouraged to reach their full potential. Children's safety and wellbeing are paramount, and we aim to take all practical steps to protect children from harm, ensuring a healthy and safe environment.

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management, and visitors to Weldon.

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the approved provider must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for providing a child-safe environment and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed. (Regulation 168, Regulation 170). The National Law requires management to ensure all children being educated and cared for are adequately supervised and every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury. Our focus is to provide a child-safe environment that is reflected in our policies and procedures and understood and demonstrated in the quality of our practices.

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Our Service is committed to being a child-safe organisation and endorses the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, placing the protection of children as a priority of our responsibilities and obligations. The Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission guide Weldon, to ensure our policies and procedures, strategies, and attitudes, ensure children's safety is paramount.

Weldon has zero-tolerance for child abuse, and we are committed to the safety, participation, and empowerment of all children. We promote diversity and tolerance and aim to form equitable and positive relationships with children. We ensure children participate in decisions affecting them and listen and respect their suggestions and ideas. We identify and respond to any concerns, disclosures, allegations, or suspicions of harm in a timely manner.

We are dedicated to promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and providing a safe environment for children with additional support needs.

Recruitment

Weldon maintains rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection process to ensure the recruits are possible based on skills, qualifications, experience and suitability for the position available. All recruits participate in robust interviews and have reference checks completed to ensure the applicant's suitability to the role, previous experiences and their commitment to child safe values and practices. All staff are provided with a comprehensive induction process that outlines our Code of Conduct, identifying and responding to child abuse, grievance processes, and work health and safety.

Working with Children and Police Checks

Working in conjunction with the Child Protection Act and National Regulations, the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children is paramount within our Weldon community. A Working with Children Check (WWCC) is a requirement for people who work in child-related work. It involves a national criminal history check and a review of findings of workplace misconduct.

The result of a Working with Children Check is either a clearance to work with children and is valid for five years, or a bar against working with children. Cleared applicants are subject to ongoing safety monitoring and relevant new records may lead to the clearance being revoked.

Management is responsible for the periodic review and maintenance of up-to-date records of employees' Working with Children Check, including the Working with Children Check number and the date on which each clearance expires. Once an employee provides their WWCC clearance, Weldon will verify the clearance to ensure that it is valid and current. The WWCC will be placed in the individual's file and continue to be updated as required.

CHILD PROTECTION – Mandatory reporting

Children and young people always have a right to be safe and protected. To comply with legislation and ensure a child-safe environment, educators are provided with training and ongoing supervision to ensure they understand that *child safety is everyone's responsibility*. (A guide to the Child Safe Standards. p.26. 2020)

All educators and staff are mandatory reporters and must make reports if they suspect on reasonable grounds, a child is at risk of significant harm. All staff are provided with accredited and non-accredited training about child protection law and their obligations under this law to ensure they are confident in following the reporting guidelines within NSW and adhere to our *Child Protection Policy*. (Reg 84). <https://www.weldon.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2022-Child-Protection-Policy-QA2-.pdf>

Through continual education and training, educators and staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe. Our organisational professional development and Training plan supports and promotes child safety as a priority.

Nominated supervisors and persons in day-to-day charge must complete an accredited child protection training course approved by the Regulatory Authority every three years, and ongoing "child safety" training refreshers completed at least annually.

CHILD PROTECTION - Allegations Against Employees

To protect children and ensure their safety, welfare and wellbeing, Weldon is responsive to report allegations or convictions of child abuse and child-related misconduct by any staff member or volunteer or contractor to the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) as part of the *Reportable Conduct Scheme*.

Weldon will ensure an appropriate level of confidentiality of information relating to the reportable allegations as per the Children's Guardian Act 2019. We take our legislative responsibilities as part of the Reportable Conduct Scheme seriously and will respond to any reportable allegation or conviction against employees or volunteers that may arise in a timely manner, as required.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT – Supervision and Safety Monitoring Checks

Children's safety is embedded in our day-to-day practices. We ensure effective and adequate supervision is provided to children at all times. Educators will employ 'active supervision' strategies within the program environment and when participating in excursions or transporting children. Consideration will be made for the different ages and abilities of children, children with additional support needs and activities that require different levels of supervision.

<https://www.weldon.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Supervision-Policy-QA2-1.pdf>

Sleeping infants and toddlers will be closely monitored at regular intervals and will always be within sight and hearing distance of educators so a child's breathing and the colour of their skin can be monitored.

<https://www.weldon.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/168-av-Sleep-Rest-Relaxation-Policy-QA2.pdf>

Through conducting risk assessments, we assess and manage risks in the physical environment collaborating with children to develop behaviour guidelines for play including adventurous play to ensure their safety. Educators have a sound understanding of their duty of care and responsibilities in ensuring a child-safe environment.

Educators conduct regular safety monitoring checks to maintain basic standards of safety. We believe that child safety is a shared responsibility at all levels within Weldon. Children are encouraged to speak up about their safety and the safety of their friends by telling an educator if they feel unsafe in a particular situation or environment.

<https://www.weldon.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/168-b-Incident-Injury-Trauma-and-Illness-Policy-QA2.pdf>

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT – Equipment, Furniture and Safety Maintenance Record

The premises and all equipment and furniture used are audited to ensure all aspects are safe, clean and in good repair. We understand that hazards are specific to developmental stages; educators are aware that toys and equipment need to be checked to ensure they are safe and developmentally appropriate for children. Regular safety checks occur to ensure that all toys, furniture and equipment are in good condition and working order.

Risk Assessment

It is a legislative requirement that Weldon and educators implement a risk management system where they identify and manage hazards and risks within the workplace to ensure a child-safe environment. The key principles of risk management include:

1. Identifying all hazards or potential hazards in the service/residence/venue
2. Assess the risk of harm or potential harm for each hazard
3. Control or manage the risk – Risk Rating Matrix
4. Monitor and improve safety – Risk Assessment Action Plan
5. Evaluate and Review

It is the responsibility of all staff and educators in the program to complete a risk assessment where children's safety may be jeopardised and when organising an excursion/incursion or any transportation of children.

Emergency and Evacuation Procedures

Management will ensure that copies of the emergency and evacuation floor plan are displayed in prominent positions near each exit of the premises, including indoor and outdoor learning areas.

All staff are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures and regulatory requirements.

Rehearsals for emergency and evacuation procedures, including lockdowns, are conducted at least once every 3 months.

An evaluation process informed quality practice improvement.

<https://www.weldon.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/168-e-Emergency-and-Evacuation-Policy-QA2.pdf>

Arrival and Departure Authorisation

Weldon prioritises children's safety at all times. We will only release children to an authorised person as named on the child's enrolment form. We request families provide current court orders, and parenting plans to ensure our records are up to date.

National Regulations require our Service to keep a record of children and visitor's arrival and departures, with the signatures of the person responsible for verifying the accuracy of the record and the identity of the person collecting the child.

Educators will work in collaboration with our *Arrival and Departure Policy* and *Student and Visitors Policy* to ensure children feel safe and secure. Our *Safe Transportation of Children Policy* ensures children are collected from and delivered to the programs in a safe manner.

<https://www.weldon.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/168-f-Arrival-and-Departure-Policy-QA2.pdf>

<https://www.weldon.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/168-i-iii-Volunteers-Students-and-Visitors-Policy-QA4.pdf>

Continuous Review

To ensure we maintain a culture of continuous improvement, we will ensure our child safe practices are regularly reviewed, evaluated and improved. We aim to ensure all educators, staff and volunteers understand and effectively implement our policies and procedures to provide a child-safe environment at Weldon.

We will regularly review and monitor the effectiveness of our Child Safe policies and procedures and invite children, staff members, families and communities to contribute to their development.

Any updates or revisions will be communicated to all stakeholders as required.

Families

Weldon ensures families are always welcome and feel comfortable asking questions on how we prioritise child safety. We provide a range of opportunities for consultation and collaboration about decisions about their child's safety whilst at Weldon including:

- policy and procedure review
- child protection practices
- allegations/grievance procedures
- sun safety
- written authorisations- parenting orders
- code of conduct
- inclusivity and supporting children with support needs.

SOURCE

- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. ACECQA. (2021). Policy and procedure guidelines. *Providing a Child Safe Environment*.
- Australian Government. Department of Skills, Education and Employment. *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. (2009) and *My Time Our Place*
- Australian Human Rights Commission (2020). *Child Safe Organisations*. <https://chilsafe.humanrights.gov.au/>
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
- Children's Health and Safety – An analysis of Quality Area 2 of the National Quality Standard
- Department of Education NSW Providing a child-safe environment
- Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2011).
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).
- Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2017). (Amended 2020).
- NSW Department of Education (2021). [Guide to the Child Safe Standards for early childhood education and care and outside schools hours care services](#)
- NSW Government Office of the Children's Guardian:
 - *A guide to the Child Safe Standards*. (2020).
 - *Reportable Conduct Scheme*
 - *Code of Conduct*
- [United Nations Convention of Rights of the Child, \(1989\)](#). (UNCRC)
- Work Health and Safety Act, (2011).