THE LADY GEORGE KINDERGARTEN

Child Protection in Early Childhood Education and Care Services

Summary

This policy describes the scope of obligations that must be met to maintain child safe environments in DECD schools, early childhood education and care services, including through the provision of child protection curriculum.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to describe the roles and responsibilities of education and care staff and volunteers in establishing and maintaining child safe environments, including through the provision of child protection curriculum.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers working in The Lady George Kindergarten (as part of DECD schools and early childhood education and care services, DECD education and care leaders).

POLICY DETAIL

Principles

a) Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is a fundamental responsibility that cannot be compromised by other considerations.

b) Children and young people have a right to:
   • be treated with respect and to be protected from harm
   • be asked to express their views and wishes about matters affecting their lives and to have those views appropriately considered by adults
   • feel and be safe in their interactions with adults and other children and young people
   • understand, as early as possible, what is meant by ‘feeling and being safe’
   • the support of staff in their education or care environment whose role includes being an advocate for their safety and wellbeing

c) Children and young people are entitled to the rights at 4.1(b) irrespective of their special needs, gender, race, sexual orientation or cultural, religious or family circumstances.

d) Preventing and intervening in the abuse and neglect of children and young people are moral and legal obligations. They contribute to improving the safety and health of current and future generations.

e) Safety and wellbeing concerns arise within family, community and institutional settings. The actions and efforts of people from within and outside the education and care setting are needed so that interventions on behalf of children and young people are successful and sustained.
Maintaining children and young people’s attendance at, and engagement with education and care environments is a key contributor to their long-term health, safety and wellbeing.

**Obligations**

DECD must meet each of the following five obligations in order to maintain child safe environments.

1) **Screening and suitability**

Staff, volunteers and other persons identified by legislation or DECD policy will be screened as part of an ongoing process to ensure adults are suitable to work, access or volunteer in DECD sites/services.

- Suitability must be established at the point of recruitment and monitored continuously.

- Continuous monitoring of suitability includes the responsibility of all adults to report inappropriate conduct towards children and young people by any person engaged with the site or service.

2) **Training and support**

Staff and volunteers will receive training that explains their responsibilities for children’s safety and wellbeing and outlines how those responsibilities should be met with sensitivity and purpose. The training will cover the obligations underpinning a child safe environment and will include the role of a mandated notifier under Section 11(1) and (2) of the Children’s Protection Act 1993.

- Staff will undertake and follow the approved full day child protection training program as a condition of employment and receive approved three yearly update programs thereafter.

- Volunteers will receive the approved child protection induction session as a condition of volunteering.

- Staff designated to provide advocacy for children and young people’s safety and wellbeing will meet relevant DECD job and person specifications and will receive approved induction, ongoing professional development and support.

- Staff involved in teaching the approved child protection curriculum will receive training, ongoing professional development and support.

- Personnel with responsibility to investigate serious allegations against staff or volunteers in DECD sites/services will meet DECD job and person specifications, will receive induction and will have support and supervision appropriate to the critical nature of their work.

3) **Adult Conduct**

Staff and volunteers will relate respectfully and protectively with children and young people. Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report and intervene against behaviours that compromise the safety or wellbeing of children and young people.

- Staff and volunteers will follow approved protective practice guidelines in all their physical and social interactions with children and young people.

- Staff and volunteers will report and document concerns raised about inappropriate adult conduct towards children and young people.

- Staff will follow approved attendance, behaviour management and incident response policies and guidelines.

- Serious allegations of sexual misconduct against staff or volunteers will be referred to the DECD Incident Management Division (in liaison with SA Police) and decisions about the placement of the individual facing an allegation will be made with the best interests of children as the paramount consideration.

4) **Access to curriculum**

Children and young people will engage with curriculum which explicitly teaches them about the nature of personal safety and wellbeing, their rights to personal safety and wellbeing, help seeking and self-protecting behaviours and their responsibilities to the safety and wellbeing of others. This policy utilises Section 82 of the South Australian Education Act (1972) which gives the Director General the right to determine curriculum in government schools.

- All children and young people in DECD preschools and schools will access approved child protection curriculum each year.

- The approved child protection curriculum will be taught by staff that have received training in its use.

- The approved child protection curriculum will be reviewed in response to emerging evidence about child abuse and violence prevention programs.
5) Communication, collaboration and record keeping

Issues affecting children and young people’s safety and wellbeing are often complex. Successful interventions require carefully coordinated and communicated actions. Staff and volunteers will meet the following commitments, as required by their role.

At enrolment parents/carers will be made aware of the site or service’s unqualified commitment to children’s safety, the fact that some matters must be reported irrespective of parents’ wishes and the use of the SA Information Sharing Guidelines in preventing harm to children & young people.

• Parents and carers will be appropriately informed about allegations of sexual misconduct in keeping with the guidance of the 2013 Report of the Independent Education Inquiry Royal Commission. All available sources of support within DECD and from other agencies and organisations will be considered and sought when the needs of vulnerable children and young people are first identified.

• Education and care staff will actively support interagency efforts to improve family and community safety.

• DECD leaders will be alerted when existing collaborations and available services are unable to properly protect children’s safety and wellbeing.

• DECD, state and national requirements for record keeping will be followed at all times and for all circumstances.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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<th>Role</th>
<th>Responsibility for</th>
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<td>5.1</td>
<td>Site/service leaders</td>
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<td>Ensure</td>
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<td>• screening of adults working or volunteering at the site complies with the DECD approved screening policy</td>
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<td>• volunteers receive approved child protection induction which is recorded at the site/service</td>
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<td>• 3 yearly approved staff child protection training is recorded on the HR system</td>
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<td>• concerns raised about staff or volunteer conduct are responded to in accordance with approved protective practice guidelines</td>
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<td>• children and young people in preschools and schools access the approved child protection curriculum each year</td>
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<td>• emerging staff performance concerns are responded to proactively</td>
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<td>• staff follow all record keeping requirements</td>
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<td>• counsellors and staff in designated advocacy positions can fulfill their roles and access required training and counselling/advocacy networks</td>
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<td>• conduct and practice at the site is monitored to ensure it meets the obligations outlined in this policy</td>
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5.2  Staff

• act in accordance with the obligations outlined in this policy
• raise concerns when barriers or threats to the protection of children and young people’s safety and wellbeing are identified, including through the conduct of other adults at the site/service
5.3 Volunteers

- act in accordance with the obligations outlined in this policy and the approved child protection induction for volunteers
- raise concerns when barriers or threats to the protection of children and young people’s safety and wellbeing are identified, including through the conduct of other adults at the site/service

Reviewed: March, 2016

Reviewed and Updated: