

Child Safe Environment Policy Statement

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline our commitments to maintaining child safe and friendly environments. Making Strides Allied Health recognises the importance of establishing and maintaining a safe, child friendly environment where all children and young people are valued and feel safe.

Making Strides Allied Health recognise that we have a responsibility to:

- Take a proactive approach on child wellbeing and safety
- Value and embrace the views of children and young people
- Encourage children and young people to reach their full potential
- Take action on the protection of children and young people from harm or risk of harm
- Commit to ensuring the value, respect, diversity and equity of all children and young people is upheld regardless of ability, sex, gender, or social economic or cultural background, and that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated
- Ensuring a child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the business, from the top down and bottom up

This policy complies with Making Strides Allied Health's obligations under the South Australian Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, including Sections 114 and 115 of the Act, which requires businesses to establish and periodically review policies and procedures to ensure that:

- Child safe environments are maintained within the organisation; and
- Appropriate reports of risk of harm are made under Section 30 of the Act.

This policy also aligns with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

Scope

As a small business this policy applies to all employees, as well as the children, young people, families/carers, services and schools that we engage with and/or provide services to. As a condition of service agreement, employees within Making Strides Allied Health will be required to agree, in writing, to the conditions listed within this Child Safe Environments Policy. Failure to agree in writing forfeits opportunities for employment, and service engagement by interested parties (e.g., clients) with the service. It must be noted that there are strict conditions to employment that must be attained before an employee is allowed to work for Making Strides Allied Health. All employees will be required to pass a DHS Working with Children Check and Vulnerable Person Related Employment clearance, as well as a National Police clearance.

Definitions

Child or young person - persons under 18 years of age.

Complainant – person who makes a complaint.

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.

National Police Check - a summary of an individual's offender history in Australia and a record of their criminal history relating to convictions, finding of guilt or pending court proceedings. They are available from South Australia Police (SAPOL) or organisations accredited by the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission. It is an organisational decision if a National Police Certificate (NPC) is required for workers or volunteers, however the organisation can no longer use the NPC to assess if a person is suitable to work or volunteer with children in South Australia, this must be determined by a valid, not prohibited Working with Children Check.

Working with Children Check - People working or volunteering with children in South Australia must, by law, have a valid, not prohibited Working with Children Check. A Working with Children Check is an assessment of whether a person poses an unacceptable risk to children. As part of the process, the Screening Unit will look at criminal history, child protection information and other information.

Children and young people's participation

Making Strides Allied Health will inform children, young people, and families/carers about their rights through policy and procedural documentation including the service agreement, intake form, consent to services & consent for exchange of information forms.

Making Strides Allied Health encourages and respects the views of children and young people who access our services. We involve and encourage children and young people to participate in making decisions that affect them. This includes listening to and acting upon any disclosures, feedback or complaints that children, young people or their families/carers raise with us.

Making Strides Allied Health ensures that children, young people and their families/carers know their rights and how to access services, advice and the complaints processes available to them.

Code of Conduct

Making Strides Allied Health is required to act in accordance with the following Codes of Conduct:

- Australian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics
- The NDIS Code of Conduct

- Making Strides Allied Health Code of Conduct

Making Strides Allied Health Code of Conduct exists to set out the standard of behaviour for all personnel operating within the business. People can report a breach of the Code of Conduct through Making Strides Allied Health feedback, complaints and disputes process via the email below, or by providing informal feedback verbally. If a child, young person or family/carer identifies that we have breached the Code of Conduct we will make a personal commitment to resolve this issue which may include active efforts to address the breach, consultation with an external supervisor, and consultation with the Australian Association of Social Workers.

A copy of our Code of Conduct can be obtained by contacting Sarah Zappia on 0434 888 066 or email sarah.makingstrides@outlook.com.

Communication

Making Strides Allied Health ensures that this policy is publicly available to all clients, is introduced as part of the intake process, and families/carers are informed of the policy and how to access it. Employees are provided a copy of this policy at recruitment.

Recruitment

To ensure Making Strides Allied Health is engaging the most suitable people to work with children and young people, the following recruitment practices are in place:

- Our commitment to child safety is included in all job advertisements
- Clear position descriptions include our commitment to child safety and wellbeing
- Written applications from applicants
- Face-to-face interviews that use behavioural questions to determine the applicant's knowledge of child safeguarding
- A minimum of two referee checks, including from most recent employer, and qualification checks.

Making Strides Allied Health meets the requirements of the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* which requires:

- We are registered with the DHS Screening Unit and we link all Working with Children Checks
- That staff and volunteers have a current, 'not prohibited' Working with Children Check and Vulnerable Person Related Employment check issued by the DHS Screening Unit prior to working with children and young people. The accuracy of results are verified on the DHS Screening Unit online organisational portal.

- For existing employees, Making Strides Allied Health will verify they renew their Working with Children Check every 5 years and the status remains as not prohibited. Verification will be done online through the Organisation Portal via the DHS Screening Unit
- Making Strides Allied Health will advise the Screening Unit when the organisation becomes aware of certain information regarding any person involved with the organisation, including any serious criminal offence, child protection information, or disciplinary or misconduct information.

Supervision & Training

Making Strides Allied Health will ensure:

- That staff are knowledgeable about current legislation and reporting requirements related to child protection and maltreatment and uphold responsibilities as Mandated Notifiers
- Provide access to current information about the relevant procedures required to respond to allegations harm or risk of harm to children and young people
- Ensure staff complete masterclass RRHAN-EC training followed by refresher training every 3 years or as required by the Department for Education

Reporting and responding to harm and risk of harm

All staff at Making Strides Allied Health are mandated notifiers, with a legal obligation to notify the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) as soon as practical if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is or may be at risk of harm.

Reports regarding the reasonable belief that a child or young person is, or may be, at risk of harm are to be made to the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 or if at immediate risk, report to South Australia Police (SAPOL) on 000. In cases involving Aboriginal children and young people, support is provided by Yaitya Tirramangkotti - an Aboriginal team, via the CARL number.

The individual who identifies the harm or risk of harm is required to make the report to CARL/SAPOL. If the mandated notifier is unsure whether a report has been made by an external party, they will also make a report based on information known/provided. Any concerns or reports regarding misconduct, harm or risk of harm, or inappropriate behaviour towards a child and young person must also be communicated (following a report to authorities) to the Making Strides Allied Health Director, or nominated persons at the discretion of the Director, if appropriate. Making Strides Allied Health will be guided by the relevant authority (CARL/SAPOL) about whether an internal investigation is appropriate.

In addition, all adult employees, volunteers etc have a legal obligation to:

- report child sexual abuse to the police and
- to protect a child from sexual abuse

- failure to meet these obligations may be considered a criminal offence (Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 (s.64A & s.65))

Should an allegation of harm be made against a Making Strides Allied Health employee, the employee will be immediately removed from client-facing duties which involve the coordination and facilitation of care and services to children and young people until the matter is resolved by the mention authorities. Making Strides Allied Health also reserves the right to terminate employment and/or place an employee on temporary suspension whilst the matter is investigated. Any employee under investigation and working for the service on refined duties will also participate in increased supervision with service management. Making Strides Allied Health will also seek guidance by the relevant statutory bodies regarding service disciplinary measures with regard to the employee (e.g., termination or suspension of contract).

The safety and welfare of children and young people is paramount at Making Strides Allied Health. Whilst all matters of harm or risk of harm, and misconduct are investigated, the child/young person will continue to be provided a service whilst they, and their family, are also supported in linking with relevant specialist community and public health services for appropriate support and intervention (e.g., SA's WCH health network; DCS, Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service, CAMHS).

Risk Management

Identified risks for current service provision are identified through ongoing clinical discussion and review. Any newly identified risks to children or young people will be raised with the Director for review and mitigation.

Identified Risk	Likelihood	Action
Direct one-to-one services/sessions with a child or young person	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therapist to work in a school/home location deemed appropriate by school/family which has line of sight and is viewable
Taking images of children and young people used for personalised resources such as schedules/social stories	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure consent for taking images is obtained by the child or young person and their legal guardian. • Images to be used strictly for intended purposes, stored on secure locations and shared with client's guardians/school staff.
Supervision of children and young people	High	<p>Making Strides Allied Health do not have duty of care over children & young people at schools, this is the responsibility of school staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure schools are aware of this when working in their settings, work in line of sight and have appropriate school staff support accessible when needed.

Physical contact	Low	<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	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and young people are monitored by parent/caregiver when accessing the online environment, particularly during Telehealth sessions Cyber safety and social media guidelines are in place and provided to all workers Appropriate supervision is provided for all online activities Workers must not communicate with children or young people via social media
Privacy and Confidentiality	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing the child or young person with privacy and confidentiality unless in instances where the worker is obligated to report concerns of harm to self or others. This will be outlined to the child/young person at the commencement of services.

Practices to ensure Making Strides Allied Health continue to mitigate risks:

- We will maintain regular and consistent communication with the child/young person's legal guardian and school regarding the details of the service provided and any concerns
- Our Child Safe Environments Policy (including Code of Conduct) are made available to children, young people and their legal guardians when requested
- Our Complaints Policy is clearly communicated to clients including children, young people and their families/carers
- Our child focused Code of Conduct is adhered to that sets the behavioural expectations of all employees including what happens when a breach occurs
- Making Strides Allied Health meets the requirements of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (which mandates child safe environments) and the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (which mandates Working with Children Checks)
- Strategies are in place to make sure that child safety (through the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations) are embedded across the business.

- Inclusive, developmentally-appropriate language and resources are used to support the child/young person to feel valued, respected and included
- Regular supervision and training of all employees to increase awareness of effective consulting with children and young people, and to increase awareness of harm and risk of harm and appropriate reporting procedures
- Children, young people, and parents and caregivers are encouraged to participate and provide feedback during sessions

Policy Review

Making Strides Allied Health will review this policy once every five (5) years in accordance with Section 115 of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 or sooner should a new risk, critical incident or concern require a review of this policy. Making Strides Allied Health will lodge a new compliance statement with the Department of Human Services after each review / update of this policy.

Date of last review: November 2023

Next review: November 2028



Sarah Zappia

Director

On behalf of **Making Strides Allied Health Pty Ltd**

23 November 2023