

## 3.1 Protection of Children and Vulnerable People Policy

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the Aldinga Community Centre's commitment to the protection and safety of children and all vulnerable people that use our programs and services.

### 2. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Centre's Board to ensure that this policy is implemented.

It is the responsibility of the Centre's Community Development Officer to ensure that the procedures are implemented.

### 3. Principles

The Centre recognises its legal and ethical responsibility to the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and other vulnerable persons who access the services and programs of the Centre.

### 4. Definitions

*Child* - means a person under the age of 18.

*Criminal history screening* - involves obtaining information about relevant potential employees, volunteers, contractors or consultants on the basis that the information is deemed relevant to working in a child-related area. The information gathered may include details concerning previous employment and relevant experience; verification of qualifications and professional registration; criminal history information, National Working with Children and Vulnerable People check, reference checks and work history reports.

*Vulnerable Person* – someone over 16 who is, by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and unable to safeguard their own wellbeing, property, legal rights or other interests, and either of the following applies:

- the person is engaging in (or is likely to engage in) conduct which causes or is likely to cause self-harm; or;
- another person's conduct is causing (or is likely to cause) the person to be harmed or exploited.

(Definition adapted from Law Commission's, 'Making Decisions', Lord Chancellors Department 1999, U.K and *Closing the Gap, Enhancing South Australia's Response to the Abuse of Vulnerable Older People Report* for the SA Office of Ageing and Disability Services, October 2011.)

*Child Safe Environment* – an environment which protects children from abuse and/or neglect and harm.

*Abuse* – abuse can be physical, emotional and sexual and/or neglect and include harassing behaviours like bullying.

**Physical abuse** – Physical abuse occurs when a person injures or threatens to injure a child or vulnerable person. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing and the resultant injuries may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns, bites or fractures. Possible signs of physical abuse are:

- Physical evidence of injury;
- Refusal to discuss injuries or improbable excuses to explain injuries;
- Withdrawal from physical contact;
- Fear of returning home or of caregivers being contacted
- Wariness or distrust of adults
- Aggression towards others;
- Self-destructive tendencies;
- Chronic running away.

**Emotional Abuse** – Emotional abuse is an ongoing attack on a child or vulnerable person's self-esteem. It can take the form of name calling, threats, ridicule, intimidation or isolation of the child or vulnerable person. Possible signs of emotional abuse are:

- Delays in physical, mental or emotional development including speech development and sudden speech disorders;
- Low self-esteem and high anxiety;
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations;
- Extremes of passivity or aggression;
- Drug/alcohol abuse, compulsive stealing, chronic running away.

**Neglect** – Neglect is the failure to provide the child or vulnerable person with the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter and supervision, to the extent that the person's health, development and well-being are placed at risk. Possible signs of neglect include:

- Frequent hunger, tiredness and poor hygiene;
- Lateness and non-attendance at school;
- Untreated medical problems;
- Low self-esteem and poor social relationships;

**Sexual Abuse** – Sexual Abuse occurs when an adult or someone physically bigger or older than the child or vulnerable person uses power or authority over the individual to

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involve the child or vulnerable person in sexual activity. Sexual abuse can be divided into two main categories:

- Contact abuse involves touching or fondling in a sexual manner and may include oral sex, vaginal or anal intercourse
- Non-contact abuse may include exposure to obscene or sexually intrusive comments, exposure to or participation in pornography, being forced to masturbate or watch others masturbate.

Possible signs of sexual abuse include:

- Bruises, scratches and other injuries in the genital or anal area not consistent with accidental injury;
- Evidence of itching, soreness, discharge, STDs or unexplained pain in the abdomen or genital area;
- Adolescent pregnancy where the identity of the father is secret or vague.

Behavioural indicators of sexual abuse may include:

- Precocious knowledge of sexual matters or acting out of sexual behaviour with adults, dolls or other children;
- Displaying unusual interest in the genitals of others;
- Promiscuity or repetitious sexually precocious behaviours;
- Sudden changes in mood or behaviour including sleeping and eating patterns;
- Regressed behaviours including bed wetting, or separation anxiety;
- Lack of trust in familiar adults, fear of strangers, fear of men;
- Acting out behaviours such as aggression, lying, running away, substance abuse and self-harming behaviours;
- Withdrawn behaviours such as passivity, excessive compliance or depression
- Learning problems and poor peer relationships at school;
- Excessive bathing or poor hygiene.

Sexual abuse is different to other forms of abuse in that it is usually premeditated. Offenders will take time to groom their victim by building and maintaining a trusting relationship with the child or vulnerable person and his/her carers and/or isolating the child or vulnerable person in order to abuse them.

## 5. Policy

The Centre is committed to the safety and well-being of children, young people and other vulnerable persons who access our services and programs. The Centre supports the rights of all vulnerable persons and will act without hesitation to ensure that a child safe environment is maintained at all times.

The Centre also supports the rights and well-being of staff and volunteers and encourages their active participation in building and maintaining a safe environment. The Centre has high

expectations of its partners and will only collaborate with organisations and agencies that demonstrate a similar commitment to child protection and vulnerable persons.

The Centre promotes the development of an open and aware culture that links all aspects of the environment to ensure that the Centre's program is protective, that the Centre's facilities are safe and open to appropriate surveillance. We expect clear boundaries between the personal and professional lives of staff and volunteers.

We will build and open an aware culture:

- focusing on the relationship between staff/volunteers and children and other vulnerable persons and ensuring that there are clear boundaries between roles;
- ensuring that our programs are accountable and open to outside scrutiny and influence.
- supporting staff and volunteers through the provision of rigorous recruitment practices, adequate staffing levels and ongoing supervision and training.
- ensuring that the rights of all vulnerable persons are articulated and acted upon.

## 6. Approvals

	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Procedure</b>
Approving Authority	Board of Management	Board of Management
Approval Date	21 <sup>st</sup> September 2017	21 <sup>st</sup> September 2017
Next Review Due	September 2018	September 2018