

SP-8.13 ECTARC TRAINING SERVICES CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING PROCEDURE

Allegations, Concerns & Complaint Handling Processes

ECTARC Training Services (ETS) takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Personnel are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

ETS works to ensure all children and/or young people, families and personnel know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour. We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place.

Fair Procedures for Personnel

The safety and wellbeing of children and/or young people is our primary concern. ETS is also fair and just to personnel. The decisions made by the organisation when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

ETS records all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, the organisation provides updates to children and young people, and their families on progress and any actions taken.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be personnel, parents or children and/or young people, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. ETS has safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

If a Child and/or Young Person Discloses an Incident of Abuse

- Try and separate them from the other peers discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child and/or young person use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child and/or young person that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or the police.
- Do not make promises to the child and/or young person such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child and/or young person in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child and/or young person is able to do this.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to the Child Safety Officer and ETS management as well as police or child protection department/s as relevant.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

If a Parent/Carer Says their Child has been Abused or Raises a Concern

- Explain that ETS has processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child and/or young person.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the ETS Child Safety Officer, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child and/or young person safe.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete or complete it together.

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- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.
- Be aware that:
 - Individuals from Aboriginal, culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds may face barriers in reporting allegations of abuse.
 - Individuals with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident.

You need to be sensitive to these issues and meet individuals' needs where possible.

Personnel must follow the Critical Actions below every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

If personnel believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing they must still act.

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

Personnel play a critical role in protecting children in our care.

You must act, by following the Four Critical Actions below, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child and/or young person has, or is at risk of being abused.

You must act if you form a suspicion/reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g., if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).

You must use an incident reporting form to keep clear and comprehensive notes.

ACTION 1: Responding to an Emergency

If there is no risk of immediate harm, go to ACTION 2.

If a child and/or young person is at immediate risk of harm, you must ensure their safety by:

- Separating alleged victims and others involved.
- Administering first aid.
- Calling 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns.
- Identifying a contact person in your organisation for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

Action 2: Reporting to Authorities

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you must report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

You must report all instances of suspected child abuse or suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Police.

You must also report internally to the Child Safety Officer.

If the source of suspected abuse is from within the family or community, you must report the suspected abuse to the relevant Child Protection Authority in the State or Territory jurisdiction.

This includes if a child is considered to be:

- In need of protection from child abuse
- At risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

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Action 3: Contacting Parents / Carers

The ETS Child Safety Officer must consult with Child Protection and or Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- Not to contact the parents/carers (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parents/carers to be contacted), or
- To contact the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion).

Action 4: Providing Ongoing Support

ETS must provide support for children impacted by abuse. This includes the development of a Student Support Plan developed in consultation with wellbeing professional and/or counselling personnel.

Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals.

NSW - Additional Support Mandatory Reporting

ETS uses appropriate tools to inform decision making, such as the online **Mandatory Reporter Guide** in the NSW region, professional judgement or specialist advice, where there are concerns about a child of 0 to 15 years at risk of significant harm. The NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide is available at: <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/>

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, as part of the Student Handbook, when they join the organisation.

Compliments, complaints or feedback can be provided verbally or in writing to any worker or directly to the General Manager – Training Services

ETS deals with all complaints and feedback received from children, young people or their families promptly, sensitively and fairly. The organisation:

- Listens to the complaint/feedback.
- Ensures the person receiving the complaint makes a record of it if received verbally.
- Advises of the time expected for an outcome.
- Ensures if personnel receive a complaint, they forward it to management as soon as possible.
- Ensures management responds to the complainant with an outcome within seven (7) days.
- Clearly document and securely store decisions and actions taken in response to complaints and feedback.
- Makes 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:

- Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner 8226 8666 or Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency 1300 419 495
- 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.

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Working with Children Checks and other Fit and proper Checks

All ETS personnel are required to undertake, as a component of the recruitment process and ongoing employment relevant Working With Children Checks to ensure suitability in meeting ETS's legislative and contractual obligations. Checks must be renewed prior to the expiry date and a copy provided to Administration Officer – People.

Jurisdiction	Requirements
Australian Capital Territory	All personnel providing services in the Australian Capital Territory must undertake a check that is valid for three years. https://www.act.gov.au/childabuseroyalcommission/formalresponse/working-with-children-checks
New South Wales	All personnel providing services in New South Wales must undertake a check that is valid for five years. https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/working-children-check
Northern Territory	All personnel providing services in Northern Territory must undertake a check that is valid for two years. https://nt.gov.au/emergency/child-safety/apply-for-a-working-with-children-clearance
Queensland	All personnel providing services in Queensland must undertake a check that is valid for two years. https://www.qld.gov.au/law/laws-regulated-industries-and-accountability/queensland-laws-and-regulations/regulated-industries-and-licensing/blue-card-services
South Australia	All personnel providing services in South Australia must undertake a check that is valid for three years. https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/rights-and-law/rights-and-responsibilities/screening-checks
Tasmania	All personnel providing services in Tasmania must undertake a check that is valid for three years. https://www.service.tas.gov.au/services/education-and-skills/working-with-vulnerable-people-including-children/apply-for-registration-to-work-with-vulnerable-people
Victoria	All personnel providing services in Victoria must undertake a check that is valid for five years. https://www.vic.gov.au/working-with-children-check
Western Australia	All personnel providing services in Western Australia must undertake a check that is valid for three years. https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-communities/working-children-check

It is the responsibility of each individual to register for and obtain the required check(s). Potential personnel with adverse findings in these checks undertaken at the time of recruitment will not be employed by within a student service role.

Reportable Conduct Scheme

A Reportable Conduct Scheme has been implemented across Australian jurisdictions, designed to ensure that the relevant government authorities are aware of every allegation of certain types of employee misconduct.

Importantly, a finding that a person has engaged in reportable conduct can trigger an assessment of whether that person is suitable to continue to work or volunteer with children, including a revocation of a person's Working with Children Check card.

Note: The Reportable Conduct Scheme does not replace the need to report allegations of child abuse to Police.

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What types of conduct are reportable?

There are five types of 'reportable conduct':

- Sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of, a child),
- Sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of, a child),
- Physical violence (against, with or in the presence of, a child),
- Behaviour that is likely to cause significant emotional or psychological harm, and
- Significant neglect.

A reportable allegation can be made about any person over 18 years of age who is an employee, volunteer, contractor or office holder of ETS. Allegations can be made about the conduct of people even if:

- They do not have direct contact with children, or
- The conduct occurred outside of their work.

Requirements of heads of organisations

The ETS Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the determined 'Head of Organisation' under the scheme. In the implementation of all Child Safety and Wellbeing Policies and procedures, it is ultimately their responsibility to ensure the Commission is notified of any reportable allegations they become aware of.

This includes requirements to:

- Have in place systems to prevent child abuse and, if child abuse is alleged, to ensure allegations can be brought to the attention of appropriate persons for investigation and response, and
- Ensure that the Commission is notified and given updates on the organisation's response to an allegation.

Key responsibilities include:

- Notifying the relevant government authority within three (3) business days of becoming aware of a reportable allegation,
- Investigating an allegation subject to police clearance on criminal matters,
- Advising the relevant government authority who is undertaking the investigation,
- Managing the risks to children,
- Within thirty (30) calendar days, providing the relevant government authority detailed information about the reportable allegation and any action you have taken, and
- Notifying the relevant government authority of the investigation findings and any disciplinary action the entity has taken (or the reasons no action was taken).

The relevant government authority carefully considers each allegation that it receives under the Reportable Conduct Scheme. The relevant government authority may decide to:

- Give ETS support and guidance on the matter,
- Check ETS is handling the allegation in a timely manner, and
- Refer a substantiated allegation to Working with Children Check or a professional accreditation body.

VERSION CONTROL	DATE RELEASED	NEXT REVIEW	APPROVED BY	AMENDMENT
Version 1	June 2025	June 2026	ECTARC Leadership	New Procedure