

STEWART HOUSE CHILD SAFE POLICY

CONTEXT

This policy demonstrates Stewart House's commitment to child safety and to the establishment and maintenance of a child safe and child friendly environment.

Stewart House is committed to:

- providing a safe environment where every person has the right to be treated with respect and is safe and protected from harm
- creating and maintaining a safe learning environment and safeguarding the emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing of children in its care.

Stewart House recognises that it has a moral and legal duty to protect children from foreseeable harm. This includes the provision of safeguards against mistreatment and timely reporting of child abuse.

This policy seeks to embed an organisational culture of child safety and applies to all people involved in the work of Stewart House including but not limited to:

- Company Directors and Members
- Company employees (permanent and casual)
- Service providers and their staff
- Volunteers anywhere across the site and off-site
- any other individual involved with Stewart House

All staff play a vital role in creating a safe Stewart House environment

Definitions

Child abuse includes—

(a) any act committed against a child involving—

- a sexual offence; or
- an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and

(b) the infliction, on a child, of —

- physical violence; or
- serious emotional or psychological harm;

(c) serious neglect of a child ".

Child means a person who is under the age of 18 years

Stewart House environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the board of directors for use by a child across each 24 hours of their stay, including

- any section of the site
- online environments (including email and internet systems); and
- other locations provided by Stewart House for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for excursions, sporting events and play, and other events).

OUR PROMISE

All children who stay with us have a right to feel and be safe. The safety and well-being of all children participating in our programs and the welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority.

Stewart House is a secure and nurturing environment where all children are valued and should feel safe anywhere across the site and whilst participating in Stewart House sanctioned activities.

All staff and other members of the broader Stewart House community have a responsibility to protect children from mistreatment

Our Student Wellbeing Manager, Residential Programs Manager and Principal are the primary points of contact to provide advice and support to children, parents, employees and volunteers regarding the safety and well-being of children at Stewart House.

CHILDREN IN THE CARE OF STEWART HOUSE

Stewart House encourages and respects the views of children who participate in our program. We listen to, and act upon, any concerns that children, their home school principals or their families raise with us. We provide students with information on what they can do if they feel unsafe.

We ensure that children and their families know their rights and how to access the complaints procedures available to them.

We value diversity and will not tolerate any discriminatory practices.

We are committed to promoting cultural safety for aboriginal children, children from a culturally, racially and/or linguistically diverse background and providing a safe environment for children with a disability (where possible within the physical confines of the site).

Stewart House has zero tolerance of child abuse

CHILD PROTECTION RESPONSIBILITIES

Caring for children brings additional responsibilities for all adults present on the Stewart House site. All staff and volunteers of Stewart House are responsible for promoting the safety and well-being of children by:

- Ensuring the safety and welfare of the child is paramount at all times.
- Treating all children with dignity, equality and respect.
- Adhering to Stewart House's policies at all times.
- Listening and responding appropriately to the views and concerns of children.

- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children within the organisation and whilst engaged in off-site activities.
- Ensuring children understand their rights and explaining to the child in age-appropriate language what they can expect when participating in an activity or program offered by Stewart House.
- Responding quickly, fairly and transparently to any serious complaints made by a child, home school principal or the child's family.
- Notifying as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected.

RECRUITMENT PRACTICES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

Stewart House has procedures in place for careful selection of staff, staff training and the implementation of a staff code of conduct to enforce a high level of professional standards.

Stewart House takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. We employ a range of screening measures and apply best practice standards in the screening and recruitment of employees and volunteers.

Stewart House will not knowingly engage anyone who poses an unacceptable risk to children or partner with any organisation or service provider that does not meet Stewart House's child protection standards.

All employment contracts contain provisions for disciplinary actions up to and including dismissal for any person who breaches the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct.

Stewart House has a Staff Code of Conduct and individual employment contracts which include guidelines and direction in relation to staff /children contact. Relationship boundaries are clearly explained and staff are directed to avoid behaviours and actions which could place children and staff at risk of harm or of allegations of harm.

The Code of Conduct outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relation to children. All Stewart House employees must certify that they have read, understood this Child Safe Policy, the Child Protection Policies of Stewart House and Code of Conduct and agree to comply with the principles and standards they contain. Employees understand that a breach of the Code may result in disciplinary action including termination of employment.

SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

Stewart House seeks to develop, attract, retain and engage the best employees and volunteers. We provide support and supervision so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated.

We ensure that employees/volunteers who work with children have ongoing supervision, support and professional learning including opportunity for critical reflection so that their capacity is developed and enhanced to promote the establishment and maintenance of a child safe environment.

All employees receive regular training sessions that include a focus on ongoing learning about child protection and other matters that affect children.

INDUCTION AND TRAINING

New staff undergo induction which emphasises duty of care, child protection, and the statutory duty to report child abuse. All staff undergo regular training in recognising symptoms of child abuse, duty to report and reporting procedures.

All salaried staff are required to show evidence of completion of online training modules on preventing and reporting child abuse and to specifically update their knowledge using e-learning packages on

- Managing trauma
- Understanding problem sexual behaviour and sexual harm
- Teaching personal safety
- Recognising and responding to grooming
- Responding to disclosures and reporting disclosures

REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Stewart House will not tolerate incidents of child abuse.

All employees and volunteers understand their obligation to notify as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is being, abused or neglected.

Child Protection is everyone's responsibility. Stewart House recognises that when a report is made, we still have a role in supporting the child. This support may include referring the child to other appropriate services.

CONCERNS RELATING TO THE ACTIONS OF AN EMPLOYEE OR VOLUNTEER

Employees and volunteers must report to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) any reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is being, abused or neglected by any adult on the site. If the CEO is not available, then the Chairman of the Stewart House Board of Directors will accept the report.

In response to any report concerning a member, director, employee, service provider or volunteer of this organisation, the CEO may determine to take disciplinary action in association with law enforcement and the service provider's own employer. Other protective actions may also be introduced to ensure the safety of children within Stewart House

STRATEGIES TO MINIMISE RISK

Stewart House has strong risk management policies and procedures to:

- identify risks of child abuse and to mitigate those risks
- detect suspected child abuse
- safeguard the child and
- report suspected child abuse to the appropriate authorities.

BULLYING

Stewart House acknowledges that bullying is a serious issue and can result in anxiety with risk of serious harm to children. Children are instructed not to ignore comments or actions that upset

them or make them feel uncomfortable. Children have their own complaints procedures and are encouraged to report the matter immediately where it will be dealt with by teachers, supervisors and/or senior management.

CHILDREN'S WELLBEING AND COUNSELLING

Stewart House has in place policies and procedures for the early detection of children at risk of not being able to complete their stay and a framework of support and counselling.

E-SAFETY

Stewart House has in place guidelines to support and encourage cyber-safe behaviours. These include responsible use of information communication technologies policy with guidelines and cybersafety contracts for children and staff use of official resources embedded within a code of conduct.

USE OF VISUAL IMAGES, WRITTEN PUBLICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Stewart House must portray children in a dignified and respectful manner and not as vulnerable or submissive at all times. Photographs, films of children and internet publications must respect and be in the best interest of the child, be only used after evidence of caregiver permission and comply with the Code of Conduct.

SUPPORTER ENGAGEMENT

Stewart House recognises the need to implement specific guidelines to manage child protection risks when allowing supporters to engage with the program. Stewart House proactively manages these risks through the Marketing Manager who makes the final determination on acceptable interactions.

VISITORS TO STEWART HOUSE

All visitors to Stewart House must be clearly identified, sign in to a visitors register and wear Stewart House identification.

All contractors working on the site when children are in residence will be directly supervised by Stewart House personnel. Regular and planned maintenance by contractors will usually occur when children are not present on the site.

COMMUNICATION

Members of the general public may contact the Chief Executive Officer through marketing@stewarthouse.org.au, should they require further clarification about any aspect of this policy.