

Child Safe Standards for Organisations

The Royal Commission Into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has recommended the [Child Safe Standards](#) to drive cultural change and provide a framework for making organisations safer for children. The Standards are designed to be 'high level' and flexible enough to support localised implementation and recognise the range of organisational types, sizes and capacities. The Standards aim to drive implementation of child safe cultures for all sectors and within all organisations providing services to children and young people. For Stewart House, child safety is core business, and it is important to remember when implementing the Standards, that new practices should avoid creating undue burden on the organisation and workers which may divert resources away from serving children and young people. The Standards do not prescribe additional activities for Stewart House, but provide a systematic framework to guide ways of working which prioritise children's safety, wellbeing and participation.

The Board of Directors expect that Stewart House implements the National Child Safe Standards. The Standards are:

1. Child safety is embedded in organizational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account.
5. People working with children are suitable and supported.
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse (or other concerns) are child focused.
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe.

Implementing the Standards

The Child Safe Standards provide a systemic framework for Stewart House to address the cultural, operational and environmental risks that could increase the likelihood of abuse of children, or which inhibit detection of, and appropriate and proportionate responses to, harm to children within organisational contexts. Stewart House's senior management has considered each standard, identified related risks, and developed ways to manage or mitigate those risks.

The Standards are not intended to be followed uncritically or inflexibly by Stewart House staff, but rather are designed to be flexible enough to support local implementation across our diverse setting, while still providing clear guidance on how we can be child safe.

Child Safe Standard	Implementation guidance and practice examples
<p>1. Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.</p>	<p>Adoption of Standard 1 shows that Stewart House has a commitment to child safety and wellbeing through all levels of the organisation across the site, and that organisational leadership and governance promote an inclusive, welcoming and accountable environment and culture for children and young people. Governance arrangements are transparent and include a child safety and wellbeing policy, practice guidance, a Code of Conduct and a risk management framework. Organisational leadership provides an authorising environment for the sharing of information about risks to children and young people.</p> <p>At Stewart House:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive and senior management teams demonstrate through their actions and behaviours that Stewart House core business is to empower children and young people and support their safety when accessing the Program. • Stewart House makes its commitment to child safety explicit, for example through a public statement on its website • The risks to child safety in activities planned for in and outside Stewart House are assessed and addressed as part of ongoing risk management strategies, and explicit provisions are made for children’s safety on excursions. • Our Chief Wellbeing Officer, Residential Psychologist and School Counsellor provide important specialist advice and training to school and supervisory staff. Practice tools and scripts aim to build capacity and encourage reflection on organisational safety across the site.

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<p>2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.</p>	<p>Standard 2 describes an organisational culture that supports children and young people to understand what child safety and wellbeing means. Children and young people are informed about their rights and responsibilities in an age appropriate way. They contribute and actively participate in building a safe organisational culture.</p> <p>At Stewart House:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people access resources that explain their rights and responsibilities when they are enrolled in the Program. Supervisors and Teachers use visual verbal explanations in inductions at the beginning of the stay and further remind children in the second week of the Program • One of our approaches underpinning child-centred practice, reflects children are the experts in their own experiences and are often best placed to guide decisions around how to manage their own safety. The Student Wellbeing Team is proactive in empowering children to participate in decisions about therapeutic responses and ongoing involvement in the Program. • Children are involved in service improvement activities including monitoring and review through survey at the conclusion of their stay. Children are afforded the opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions in relation to staff, activities and services • Children are counselled on what constitutes safe contact with others. • There are ongoing opportunities for children to communicate and raise their concerns after initial debrief with classroom teachers, school learning support officers, cabin supervisors and members of the Wellbeing team. • Children contribute to acceptable standards in cabin and classrooms settings, as well as dining room, playground, assembly and other areas as necessary as they come to understand Stewart House's expectations and Raising Responsibility behaviour management framework. • We cater for individual needs including dietary preference by gathering information before and during their stay. • Supervisors are asked to report children's health issues for triage by our Registered Nurse and Health Liaison Officer. Children are made to feel comfortable with these assessment and treatment processes.

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<p>3. Families and communities are informed and involved</p>	<p>Standard 3 emphasises the importance of involving families and caregivers, community members including the home school, in Stewart House's approach to child safety, including in the development and implementation of relevant policies, practices, and information resources. This will help inform parents and carers about organisational safeguards, and encourage their feedback and input. Organisations are inseparable from their communities and both need to work together to enhance the safety of children. Due to their primary responsibility in the upbringing of children, parents, carers and families are often best placed to advise about their children's needs, capabilities and protective networks.</p> <p>At Stewart House:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We engage local communities (home schools and NSW Health service providers) in collaborative ways to prevent child abuse from occurring. This includes being responsive to diverse needs, including building cultural safety through local partnerships and respectful relationships. • We seek further information and strategy from the child's extended family in managing issues of aberrant behaviour. • Our Student Placement Officer and Chief Wellbeing Officer actively seek further information from home schools and carers before a child is enrolled to ensure that the child's needs can be met inside the Program. • We include in information packages to home schools and on our website, questions and answers for the benefit of carers that relate specifically to their child's participation in the Program. • We rely on the child's home school to promote the worth and heritage of our Program. • Our Wellbeing Team works collaboratively with parents and families, ensuring a trauma-informed and targeted response to dealing with a child's homesickness, attachment issues, dietary requirements and behavioural needs.. • Resources are available and accessible for families and diverse community members, which clearly explain what happens at Stewart House through Q and As and videos published on our website and through the process of completing enrolment forms.

- Our Health Liaison Officer immediately advises caregivers of health issues identified on screening or emerging with their child during the course of the Program which require medical, dental or optometric interventions.
- Our Facebook page messaging function is monitored daily for caregiver requests and these are actioned promptly
- Caregiver enquiries in relation to their child's progress across the Program are sensitively and patiently managed using information gleaned from our Student Tracking and Recording System
- Parents and Caregivers are advised of the following before they agree to enrol their child in the Program.....
 - Stewart House will advise you when your child is due to come to Stewart House, when they arrive on site, what their first week has been like and give you a reminder of when they are coming home using SMS. It is important that we have an active mobile phone number.
 - Email is the best way to contact your child. You can send a message via students@stewarhouse.org.au. The emails are provided to your child at a suitable time (when they can be read privately), but not across the weekend. All students are provided with an opportunity to send a reply email during their stay.
 - Your child will participate in a busy program of activities. Children could be on our 1.2hA site in school, in their cabins, in recreation rooms, in designated play areas or off site at the beach or on excursions that occur during daytime and night and across the weekend. You will appreciate that phone calls are not encouraged and will only be answered during office hours. There is every likelihood that your child will not be available to answer the call.
- Our Student Information Forms clearly articulate to Parents and Caregivers the shared responsibility of liability, indemnity, consent and acknowledgement that exists between all parties involved in providing care for their children.
- When children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island backgrounds participate in the Program, a copy of the child's Personalised Learning Plan is requested.

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<p>4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account</p>	<p>Standard 4 acknowledges the diversity of children and young people. Stewart House staff work with a child-centred focus and support children and young people to be more empowered and self-determined. The organisational culture acknowledges and values the strengths and individual characteristics of all children regardless of abilities, sexual preference, gender, social & economic circumstance or cultural background. A welcoming organization is one where all children and young people feel accepted and safe, where services are provided in culturally aware and inclusive ways. This reduces the risk of discrimination, exclusion, bullying and abuse.</p> <p>At Stewart House we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respond immediately to children’s needs within the Program through implementation of an integrated database which supports genuine intra site partnerships between teachers and supervisors in service delivery. • respond to all children’s and their family’s cultural needs and actively consult, record and follow their guidance. • recognise that culture is protective against harm to children • place a greater emphasis on contacting and developing collaborative practice with other services which have particular expertise in supporting a child such as caseworkers and other care providers. • employ a dedicated Placement Officer capable of discerning the requirement of additional information to support a child’s stay <p>The term ‘cultural safety’ describes an environment “where there is no assault, challenge or denial of [a person’s] identity, of who they are and what they need” and refers specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Williams, 1999, p. 213). This encompasses Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals’ assessment of their safety and capacity to engage meaningfully, on their own terms and with a non-Indigenous person or institution. This requires action from the non-Indigenous person or institution to listen, enable and support these environments, with accountability to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues of service users (R. Walker, Schultz, & Sonn, 2014).</p>

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<p>5. People working with children are suitable and supported</p>	<p>Standard 5 describes recruitment and staff development policies, including appropriate screening, that are a foundation of child safe organisations. This Standard also includes induction training, understanding child safety responsibilities, cultural safety concepts and appropriate reporting obligations. Training in record keeping and information-sharing provide staff and volunteers with the relevant practice tools to better safeguard children and young people.</p> <p>At Stewart House:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As well as conducting Working with Children Checks, we undertake screening and recruitment processes such as values-based interviewing ('why do you want to work at Stewart House?' 'how do you relate to children?') and asking referees specifically about suitability to work with children. All board employed staff participate in multiple interviews with immediate supervisors and the CEO before on boarding. • On site staff are also employed by the NSW Departments of Education and Health and adhere to their strict guidelines and practices including merit selection processes for tenured positions. The Stewart House Board is represented on all selection panels for teaching appointments at Stewart House and has immediate access to decision makers within the Northern Sydney Local Health District. • Staff are made aware in an ongoing way of reporting obligations and child safety responsibilities, including through induction processes and policies, and prescribed annual professional learning and know who to ask for help and support to meet reporting and other safety responsibilities. • Adequate supervision and support is provided to all staff employed within the residential and school components of the Program. This regular and formalised supervision is critical to mitigating risks of vicarious trauma, and to ensuring effective child safe practices. • All staff have capacity to involve and solicit assistance from the Wellbeing Team in the management of aberrant child behaviours or in the interpretation and application of policy either by use of the integrated data management system or at scheduled handovers. • Services provided by Northern Sydney Local Health District of Health NSW, University of NSW School of Optometry, Macquarie University School of Audiology, Teachers Health Fund and Life Education NSW are co-ordinated by the Health and Wellbeing Team accountable to the CEO. Employees and volunteers from these agencies have agreed to abide by relevant Stewart House policies and procedures. • All staff have access to employee assistance providers through their associated employers. • Supervisory and Wellbeing staff employed by Stewart House must provide current certification for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NSW Working With Children Check - NSW LR Driver Licence

- First aid qualification equivalent to St John's Provide First Aid (HLTAID003)
 - Occupational assessment, screening and vaccination against the specified infectious diseases of COVID-19, Influenza, Diphtheria, Pertussis, Hepatitis B, Tetanus, Measles, Tuberculosis, Mumps, Varicella and Rubella.
 - Completion of SMART online training (Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma) provided by the Australian Childhood Foundation
 - Completion of online training modules on preventing and reporting child abuse using Bravehearts e-learning packages on
 - o Managing trauma
 - o Understanding problem sexual behaviour and sexual harm
 - o Teaching personal safety
 - o Recognising and responding to grooming
 - o Responding to disclosures and reporting disclosures
- Staff employed by the NSW Department of Education must have a NSW Working With Children Check and have participated in an induction or child protection awareness training and an annual update (during the past 12 months). A Register is maintained of all staff child protection training. Annual training provides information on responding to child protection concerns and following these up – including making a report to the NSW Department of Communities and Justice Helpline, contacting the Education Department's Child Wellbeing Unit or monitoring and supporting students.
 - A formal Induction Policy will inform procedures and processes for on-boarding all new employees across the organisation.

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<p>6. Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse (or other concerns) are child focussed.</p>	<p>Standard 6 provides guidance on how human resource management policies and practices and effective complaints management processes should be accessible, responsive to and understood by children and young people, families, staff and volunteers. Complaint management processes are linked to the Code of Conduct and provide examples of breaches of the Code. Training helps staff and volunteers to recognise and respond to neglect, grooming and other forms of harm, provide appropriate support to children and young people in these instances and meet legal requirements. This includes training to assist in responding to different types of complaints, privacy considerations, listening skills, disclosures of harm and reporting obligations.</p> <p>At Stewart House:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We recognise that ‘child focussed’ complaint processes don’t ‘just happen’ and are an essential component of child safe organisations. ● Staff have confidential ways to raise concerns, including about another staff member, where appropriate. ● All complaints are taken seriously, are acted on appropriately and proportionately and followed up both during and after the Program if necessary. ● Ongoing training includes annual child protection updates and access to courses designed to build capacity in staff employed across the site to meet the specific needs of children enrolled in the Program. ● We review the outcomes of complaints and evaluate processes. ● Staff are inducted and updated annually in relation to their mandatory reporting obligations ● All student surveys are read and reviewed by the Residential Programs Manager. Any concerns are followed up before the children leave and noted in our Student Tracking and Recording System (STARS). ● Relevant Policies are understood and followed, including but limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health Care Policy and Procedures Handling Children’s Complaints Child Protection Critical Incident Management Corruption Prevention Grievance Mediation Code of Conduct Violence Prevention and Management Prevention of Bullying, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination

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<p>7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.</p>	<p>Standard 7 emphasises the importance of information, ongoing education and training for staff and volunteers. Staff and volunteers build on their knowledge and skills and evidence-based practice tools through professional seminars and memberships, supervised peer discussions, team training days and access to research and publications. This ensures staff and volunteers develop awareness and insights into their attitudes towards children and young people, and have a contemporary understanding of child development, safety and wellbeing. They will be able to identify indicators of child harm, respond effectively to children and young people and their families and support their colleagues. Staff and volunteers are able to respond in culturally appropriate ways to children and young people who disclose or show signs that they are experiencing harm outside the organisation.</p> <p>At Stewart House:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Managers encourage staff engagement with relevant Policy Directives and Guidelines. These resources provide evidence-based research synthesised to be useful for effective practice and are intended to build capacity and be educative, not simply procedural in nature. • Teachers and Supervisors are required to complete mandatory modules including Code of Conduct, Child Protection, CPR, Anaphylaxis and Emergency Care training. Teachers must also complete NSW Education Standards Authority teaching accreditation professional learning requirements. • All staff are bound by mandatory reporting guidelines in which the Principal or delegate processes disclosures according to DCJ and DOE Wellbeing guidelines and the CEO is notified. • Staff are supported to access formal online training and education opportunities. Supervisors complete SMART online training (strategies for managing abuse related trauma) provided by the Australian Childhood Foundation. • All staff can access online training modules on preventing and reporting child abuse using Bravehearts e-learning packages on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Managing trauma ○ Understanding problem sexual behaviour and sexual harm ○ Teaching personal safety ○ Recognising and responding to grooming ○ Responding to disclosures and reporting disclosures

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<p>8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.</p>	<p>Standard 8 highlights that reducing the risk of harm in physical and online environments is an important preventative mechanism. Risk management strategies clarify potential risks where adult to child or child to child interactions occur, or where the physical environment is unsafe. Technological platforms within organisations provide valuable tools in education, communication and help seeking.</p> <p>Risks associated with these platforms are minimised through all necessary means, including: education of children via a negotiated contract that outlines expectations of online behaviour. Safety filters and communication protocols are also applied.</p> <p>At Stewart House:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precautions are taken so that an adult is not alone with a child unobserved, through for example, ensuring clear line of sight (doors are open) when children are receiving therapeutic treatment alone. • We have clear social media policies which address contact with children and their caregivers online, and establish that children may not access smart phone or computer technologies unsupervised whilst participating in the Program. • When establishing or refurbishing Stewart House facilities, children's physical safety including cultural safety is taken into account in physical design. • Our enrolment models play a critical role in ensuring equity and accessibility of the service, particularly for people living in rural and remote areas. • Management has a responsibility to ensure child safety and employees' safety has been addressed and assessed in accordance with relevant work, health and safety policies This includes case-by-case risk assessment and mitigation processes, and implementing safety precautions such as ensuring interpreters, cultural consultants and psychologists present as required.

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<p>9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved..</p>	<p>Standard 9 emphasises that child safe organisations seek to continuously improve their delivery of child safe services and their operations. They also conduct reviews to ensure that organisational policies and procedures, including record keeping practices, are being implemented by staff and volunteers. The participation and involvement of staff, volunteers, children and young people, families and community mentors in these reviews will strengthen the organisation’s child safeguarding capacities. This includes the importance of reporting on the finding of reviews and sharing good practice and learnings on a regular basis. Regular reviews ensure that organisations address new challenges or concerns that arise.</p> <p>At Stewart House:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on supervisory staff’s existing reflective practices, executive and senior managers support a practice culture of continuous quality improvement regarding child safety. This includes critical reflection, supervision and performance appraisal for Board employees, and active, ongoing evaluative processes. These practices inform improvements to the service as a whole • In all review and improvement activities, the views expressed by children in exit surveys are used to inform the process • Complaints, incidents , accidents and near misses lead to a review of practice by the WHS committee and corresponding updates to policies and procedures through Board sanctioned committees. • Audit tools for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the implementation of Child Safe Standards are developed or sought, and used regularly, transparently and independently on a rolling three year cycle

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<p>10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe.</p>	<p>Standard 10 outlines the importance of organisations having a clearly documented child safety and wellbeing policy. This will ensure all stakeholders, including organisational staff and volunteers, children and young people and their families and carers, are aware of how the organisation is planning to meet its obligations to create an environment that is safe for children. Partner agencies or organisations funded to provide services to children and young people should demonstrate adherence to child safety and wellbeing policies and practices. Importantly, policies and procedures do not stand in place of active child safe practices and ongoing critical reflection, monitoring and review of those practices.</p> <p>At Stewart House:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our local policies accurately reflect each service provided at Stewart House and the context of the different children they serve, document how the service is child safe, and do so in easily understood language and format. • Children are advised that they can seek assistance talking to an adult or sharing their concerns in writing using a communication box and referral slips • Staff are supported by executive and senior managers to access, understand and implement policies, and there are mechanisms for staff to seek clarity and provide feedback. • Staff through employment contract and code of conduct are held accountable for familiarisation with the intent of and procedures contained within all local policies • The Board and Leadership team champion best practice and these Standards and model compliance. • Audits provide evidence of how Stewart House is child safe throughout its governance, leadership and culture.