

CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENTS POLICY

Statement of Commitment

Excel Training provides an open, welcome and safe environment for everyone participating in our programs and accessing our services and facilities. We provide high quality programs, services and facilities for children, young people and other vulnerable people within our community. Everyone participating in Excel Training's programs and accessing services and facilities provided by Excel Training (including Excel Training staff, volunteers, consultants, contractors, learners, children, parents and visitors) have a responsibility to ensure and maintain a safe environment.

This policy aims to ensure the Excel Training organisation and facilities are safe environments for children, young people and other vulnerable people and that they are protected from abuse and neglect. Excel Training is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people accessing our services and the welfare of all participants in our care will be our first priority.

This policy was developed in collaboration with all our employees, volunteers and the children who use our services and their parents. It applies to all employees, volunteers, children and individuals involved in the organisation. We seek guidance from children, young people and other vulnerable people, parents and colleagues so these standards are maintained.

Legal obligations

The *Children's Protection (Implementation of Report Recommendations) Amendment Act 2009* also amends the *Children's Protection Act 1993* to strengthen provisions relating to child safe environments. These amendments commenced on 1 January 2011. The amendments will require organisations to:

- conduct criminal history assessments on certain employees, volunteers and contractors, and
- lodge a child safe environment compliance statement with the Department for Families and Communities
- Section 8C (1) of the Children's Protection Act requires Excel Training to establish policies and procedures which take account of Department for Families and Communities Child Safe Environment Standards to ensure:
 - Child safe environments are established and maintained within the organisation;
 - Reports of suspected abuse or neglect are made under Part 4 of the Act
- Section 11(2) prescribes mandated notifiers as any Excel Training employee or volunteer providing education and /or welfare services wholly or partly for children. Mandated notifiers must report any suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child to the Department of Families and Communities Child Abuse Report Line.
- Section 8B requires criminal history screening to be undertaken by non-government organisations prescribed by regulation of people occupying or acting in a prescribed position:
 - Before a person is appointed to, or engaged in a prescribed position: and/or
 - At any time as the organisation thinks necessary or desirable for the purpose of establishing or maintaining child safe environments.

CODE OF CONDUCT

All employees, volunteers, contractors and consultants will be required to comply with the code of conduct endorsed by Excel Training which sets out standards of conduct when providing service to children.

Excel Training will;

- treat all children, young or vulnerable people with respect regardless of race, gender, disability, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment for all participants, children, young people, volunteers, staff members, parents/ guardians, community members, associates and representatives of Excel Training
- immediately report concerns or allegations for the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, or breach of this policy
- comply with and observe the laws that protect children, young and vulnerable people from maltreatment or possible harm
- take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children, young and vulnerable people from all forms of abuse, neglect or negligent treatment while in our care
- take all reasonable, appropriate and necessary steps to protect children, young and vulnerable people from risk of harm
- ensure all members engaged with the organisation treat each other with respect, dignity, sensitivity and fairness

Excel Training will not

- Discriminate against or act in favour of particular children, young or vulnerable people to the exclusion of others
- Condone or participate in behaviour with children, young or vulnerable people that is considered illegal, abusive or negligent
- Use language that is offensive, discriminatory, demeaning, shaming or culturally inappropriate, abusive or of a sexual nature when speaking with or in the presence of children, young or vulnerable people
- Condone or participant in behaviour which shames, belittles, or degrades a child, young or burnable person

The code of conduct is supported by Excel Training's grievance procedure to address breaches of the code of conduct.

Recruitment, selection and ongoing support

Excel Training will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with, and provide services to, children and other vulnerable people. Criminal history assessments will be conducted for new and existing employees, volunteers, agents, contractors or subcontractors:

- Of people occupying or acting in a prescribed position (*see definitions*)
- Before a person is appointed to, or engaged to act in a prescribed position

Excel Training acknowledges that as most people do not have a criminal history, a criminal history screening is recognised as only part of a comprehensive screening process which may also involve interviews, referee reports, checking qualifications and previous employment history in working with children

The Safe Environment Policy will be communicated to all relevant audiences to ensure awareness and understanding of Excel Training's commitment to ensuring a safe environment. This will include Excel Training Members, staff, volunteers, contractors, consultants, parents, carers, and children where relevant. This policy also aims to ensure that all relevant Excel Training managers, employers, volunteers, contractors and consultants are aware of their duty of care responsibilities for the protection, safety and wellbeing of children at all times.

Excel Training will ensure that staff, volunteers, contractors and consultants providing services to and/or working with children are aware of and are trained, and appropriately supported to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect on reasonable grounds. Excel Training has appointed the RTO Manager and the Human Resource Manager as the Safe Environment Contact Officers.

Excel Training will ensure that all staff and volunteers who have access to children, young or vulnerable peoples' records have ongoing support and training to develop, enhance and maintain a child safe environment.

Excel Training will ensure that staff, volunteers, contractors and consultants providing services to and/or working with children are aware of and are trained, and appropriately supported to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect on reasonable grounds. Excel Training has appointed the RTO Manager and the Human Resource Manager as the Safe Environment Contact Officers.

Risk Management Strategy

Excel Training will identify and assess the potential sources of harm by ensuring a risk assessment is conducted on all programs that have contact with children or vulnerable people. The assessment should identify any risks, classify any high risk activities and document the steps that will be taken to reduce or remove these risks. Other areas involved in the risk assessment processes will include human resources, activities and programs, record keeping, physical spaces and organisational culture.

Risks assessments will be undertaken at the design and proposal stage and at any reporting interval. Areas involved in the risk assessment will be

Involvement in decision making

Excel Training will promote the involvement of children, young people and other vulnerable people in service development planning where relevant, and inform them of their rights and how to access grievance procedure where relevant.

Definitions

The Children's Protection Act 1993 (SA) states that **child abuse and neglect** (or harm) in relation to a child means

- Sexual Abuse; or
- Physical or emotional abuse, or neglect to the extent that:
 - The child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, physical or psychological injury detrimental to the child's wellbeing; or
 - The child's physical and psychological development is in jeopardy.

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 qualification and professional registration; criminal history information, reference checks and work history reports.

Mandatory reporting obligation means a mandated notifier (any person providing services solely or partly to children) must report any suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child to the Department of Families and Communities Child Abuse Report Line.

Prescribed position is one that requires or involves prescribed functions as follows:

- Regular contact with children or working in close proximity to children on a regular basis
 - Close proximity means in reasonable unaided visual sight that is physically being within eyeshot;
 - Regular contact includes contact that may facilitate deliberate use of positions and status to access and exploit children. This may include multiple instances of contact of limited duration (attendance at a weekly program) or few, extended and intense periods of contact which may be away from the child's usual environment
- Supervision or management of above positions; and
- Access to records relating to children
- A prescribed position may also include one that involves provision of aged care services, or services to other vulnerable people
- Identifying prescribed positions will involve consideration of the nature of the service provided (proximity or intimacy), the frequency (incidental contact, regular and/or ongoing contact), and the vulnerability of the child or other vulnerable person in the service provision context

Additional information

- Children's Protection Act 1993 (SA)
- The **Families SA Child Safe** webpages (which contain detailed information about child safe environments including useful resources, information sheets and guidelines: www.families.sa.gov.au/childsafes)
- The **Families SA – Reporting child abuse and neglect** webpage includes information about mandated notification such as training courses and workshops at: <http://www.dfc.sa.gov.au/pub/default.aspx?tabid=485>