



## Policy HR005 Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

### **Purpose**

This Policy outlines how Gippsland Allied Health Group Pty Ltd (referred to as The Company throughout this policy) prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and what steps we will take to do this.

### **Statement of commitment to child safety**

All children who attend programs with The Company have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority and we have a zero- tolerance approach to child abuse and harm. We aim to create a child safe and child-friendly environment where children feel safe.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all employees of The Company.

Further, this policy applies to all volunteers, Management Team, children and other individuals within The Company. This policy applies to all activities – day program, camps, other activities – conducted by The Company.

### **Responsibilities**

The Management Team has the role of making sure The Company prioritizes children's safety and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about children's safety.

The Management Team will champion and model a child safe culture within The Company. We encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern. The Company will work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable raising concerns.

Everyone within The Company has a role in identifying and managing risks of child abuse and harm. The Company will make sure that staff and volunteers are conducting risk assessments and taking action to manage risks in accordance with this policy. They will also ensure that appropriate child safety training for staff and volunteers is identified and completed.

The Company will conduct an annual review of how effectively child safety and wellbeing is being delivered. The input of people involved with The Company will be sought as part of this review.

### **Definitions**

The Company refers to the Gippsland Allied Health Group Pty Ltd Management Team means the Managing Director and Company Directors.

Child abuse means:

- A sexual offence committed against a child
- An offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), such as grooming
- Physical violence against a child



- Causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- Serious neglect of a child.

Harm is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.

## Child/Children

- Means a person who is under the age of 18 years.

## Concerns and complaints

- A concern refers to any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of children.
- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction to GOTYA related to one or more of the following:
  - our services or dealings with individuals
  - allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, a volunteer or another individual associated with GOTYA
  - disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child or young person
  - the conduct of a child or young person at GOTYA
  - the inadequate handling of a prior concern
  - general concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity

## Relevant legislation and standards

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Relevant Commonwealth or Victorian legislation — for example the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) — or regulations, including legislative requirements for Working with Children Checks, mandatory reporting, the Reportable Conduct Scheme for in scope organisations and criminal offences.
- Relevant policies or standards, for example the Child Safe Standards.
  
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (including Child Safe Standards)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) (including reporting to Child Protection)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)
- Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic) (including Part XIII – Organisational liability for child abuse)

## Related Organisational Policies and Procedures

The following policies and procedures work together to support child safety and wellbeing across all of our operations:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct



# Gippsland Outdoor Therapy & Youth Adventures

215 Pryor Rd Drouin Victoria 3818 | [admin@gotya.com.au](mailto:admin@gotya.com.au) | [gotya.com.au](http://gotya.com.au)

*Part of the Gippsland Allied Health Group Pty Ltd*

- Complaint handling policy
- Recruitment and screening policy
- Disciplinary policy
- Risk management plan
- Child safe training plan

## **Access to the policy**

- Company website

## **Policy status and review**

- Current
- Reviewed 22/01/23



## Implementation of the Victorian Child Safe Standards (CSS)

### Cultural Safety for Aboriginal Children

**Child Safe Standard 1: Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.**

The Company is committed to creating environments where ATSI culture is celebrated and Aboriginal children, families and community members are welcomed and included. Strategies to embed cultural safety for Aboriginal children include:

- An Acknowledgement of Country, where appropriate
- Consulting with families and members of the local Aboriginal community to identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices in GOTYA programs
- Providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture, including through performance and during GOTYA community activities
- Supporting children who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- Providing training for staff and volunteers on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children
- Celebrating NAIDOC Week and acknowledging significant events including National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week
- Seeking feedback from Aboriginal children, families and communities on their experience at GOTYA, particularly how safe they feel expressing their identity including their culture.



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## A Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

**Child Safe Standard 2: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.**

The Company's commitment to child safety will be published on our website and conveyed to clients in our program materials

- The Company will review all child safe practices and policies at least every year.
- The Company shall also review relevant practices and policies in response to a child safety incident or 'near miss'. Findings from reviews will be reported to the people involved in our organisation and also inform our approach to continuous improvement of our child safety practices.
- The Company expects, by way of company culture and position descriptions, that expectations and strong practices around child safety are a given. Senior staff monitor that this is occurring, and regular feedback from families, agencies and authorities is also sought.
- All staff understand their responsibilities around child safety on all Company-sanctioned programs. Child safety underpins all decision making around activities and staff interaction with young people.
- The Code of Conduct (staff) is developed by the Management Team, and staff are required to read, sign and abide by it. It reflects appropriate standards of behaviour for adults working with vulnerable young people.



## **Taking Child Participation and Empowerment Seriously**

**Child Safe Standard 3: Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.**

- The Company is a person-centred organisation and actively seek to include young people's views and ideas in organisational planning, delivery of programs.
- We want young people to develop new friendships through GOTYA and encourage them to be supportive of each other. We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour between young people and take action if this occurs.
- We respect the rights of children and provide them with information about their rights including the right to be safe at GOTYA. We actively seek to understand what makes children feel safe in our organisation. We regularly communicate with children about what they can do if they feel unsafe.
- The Company values the voices of children and will act on safety concerns raised by children or their families. GOTYA supports children's participation in the following ways:
- Regular discussions with children, including child-led conversations on what makes them feel safe and unsafe.
- Consultation with children about any proposed significant changes to the physical environment, policies, procedures, programs or staffing. Children's views are collected by staff, provided to management, and considered in the decision-making process.
- Information provided to children and families about GOTYA operations, staffing and programs are made suitable for different age groups and diversity of the children.



## Involving Families and Communities

**Child Safe Standard 4: Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.**

- The Company recognises the important role of families and involves parents and carers when making significant decisions about their child. Parents, families and communities are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us.
- The Company provides information to families and community about our child safe policies and practices including through:
  - Publishing this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct on our website
  - Including information about our child safety approach, our operations and Management Team and management structure, in the Staff Information Manual
  - Including articles and information on child safety and wellbeing, and reminders about our policies and procedures via social media and email



## Respecting Equity and Diversity

### Safe Standard 5: Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

We value diversity and equity for all children. To achieve this, we:

- Provide training for all Management Team members, staff and volunteers on understanding diversity and how to support inclusion and cultural safety
- Welcome and support participation of all children, including children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, LGBTIQ children and Aboriginal children and their families
- Offer young people and families through our enrolment forms the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs to participate fully in our programs
- Have zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action when discrimination or exclusion is identified
- Deliver programming that reflects the diversity of our clients, their interests and cultures
- Acknowledge and celebrate important cultural dates
- Have a physical and online environment that actively celebrates diversity
- Commit to ensuring our facilities and online activities promote inclusion of children of all abilities.





## Ensuring that Staff are Suitable and Supported

**Child Safe Standard 6: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.**

- The Company is committed to ensuring that all leaders, staff and volunteers receive training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety and to support their engagement with children. GOTYA assists its leaders, staff and volunteers to incorporate child safety considerations into decisions and to promote a safe environment where children are empowered to speak up about issues that affect them.
- The Company Management Team members, leaders, staff and volunteers are required to complete annual child safety training. Training will be recorded in the Child Safety Training Action Plan.
- Staff and volunteers will receive supervision to support their engagement with children and for compliance with our Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- Issues or concerns about behaviour with children will be raised immediately and addressed in line with our Code of Conduct, Complaint Handling Policy and Disciplinary Policy.
- The Company places child safety and wellbeing at the center of recruitment and screening processes for staff and volunteers as outlined in the Recruitment Policy. We only recruit staff and volunteers who are appropriate to engage with children. Members of the Management Team must also be screened.
- The Company require a Working with Children Check, Police Checks and referee checks for all staff and volunteers who have a role with children or have access to children's personal information.
- The Company require staff to have appropriate qualifications for their roles and check to make sure these qualifications are valid. Members of the Management Team must hold a valid Working with Children Check and a national Police Check is required.



## Child-focused Complaint Systems

### Child Safe Standard 7: Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.

- All reports of child abuse and child safety concerns will be treated seriously, whether they are made by an adult or a child and whether they are about the conduct of an adult or a child. All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly.
- The Company has a Complaints Handling Policy that includes information for staff and volunteers about how a complaint or child safety concern will be responded to. An easy-to-understand complaints information sheet will be provided for children, families and the community to know about the complaint process and the supports available to those making a complaint and those involved in the complaint process.
- If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then staff and volunteers at GOTYA must report it in accordance with the complaint handling policy. GOTYA staff and volunteers are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police. Under the complaint handling and disciplinary policies, staff and volunteers may be subject to actions to support child safety including:
  - Being stood down during an investigation or terminated following an investigation
  - Having their duties altered so they do not engage with children at GOTYA
  - Not allowing unsupervised contact with children at GOTYA
  - Removing their access to the GOTYA IT system and facilities.
  - Complaints can be emailed to [feedback@gotya.com.au](mailto:feedback@gotya.com.au) or you can speak with the Child Safety Officer – Lorinda Mutsaers | [lorinda@gotya.com.au](mailto:lorinda@gotya.com.au)
  - *If there is concern for the immediate safety of a child, immediately call 000.*



## Staff Knowledge, Skills and Awareness

**Child Safe Standard 8: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.**

### Child Safety Officers

- GOTYA has a Child Safety Officer (CSO) with responsibility for responding to any child safety related complaints or concerns.
- The Child Safety Officer is introduced to young people so they know and understand who the appointed Officer is, and how and when they may contact them, where appropriate.
- A poster and photograph of the CSO is displayed prominently at the GOTYA Centre
- CSO – Lorinda Mutsaers | [Lorinda@gotya.com.au](mailto:Lorinda@gotya.com.au)

### Record Keeping

- The Company is committed to making and keeping full and accurate records about all child-related complaints or safety concerns.
- All child safety complaints, concerns, incidents and near misses will be recorded in the incident reporting system.
- Records which may assist with the investigation of a complaint or safety concern will be identified and kept as part of the record of an investigation. Records will be kept even if an investigation does not substantiate a complaint.
- We will record and keep the outcome of any investigations, and the resolution of any complaints. This includes findings made, reasons for decisions and actions taken.
- Records will be stored securely and kept by The Company for at least 50 years.

### Information Sharing

- The Company may share relevant information to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, where it is appropriate and in their best interests. GOTYA will keep information about complaints confidential, except where it is necessary to share information to respond properly to a complaint or to prioritise child safety. We may also need to share information about incidents or complaints with external authorities to comply with the law or to prioritise safety. More information is available in our Complaints Handling Policy.

### Non-compliance with this policy and the Code of Conduct

- The Company will enforce this policy, the Code of Conduct and any other child safety and wellbeing policies (see list below). Potential breaches by anyone will be investigated and may result in restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or engagement or other corrective action. More information can be found in our disciplinary policy.



## Safe Physical and Online Environments

**Child Safe Standard 9: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.**

- The Company recognises the importance of identifying and managing risks of child harm and abuse in the physical and online environments operated by The Company.
- The Company conducts regular risk assessments and have a risk management plan to address the risk of child abuse and harm at GOTYA.
- The risk management plan is developed in consultation with our staff, volunteers, parent representatives and children. We will ensure that any risk controls put in place balance the need to manage harm with the benefits of participating at activities. The Management Team is responsible for approving the risk management plan.
- Any contractors or other providers of services will always be supervised by a member of staff while working with us to ensure child safety. See also Code of Conduct.



## Review of Child Safe Policies and Practices

### **Child Safe Standard 10: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.**

- The Company will review all child safe practices and policies at least year, and will also review relevant practices and policies in response to a child safety incident or 'near miss'.
- Findings from reviews will be reported to the people involved in our organisation and also inform our approach to continuous improvement of our child safety practices.
- Reviews are overseen by the Management Team and will be informed by consultation with children, families and staff.



## Documenting Policies and Procedures

**Child Safe Standard 11: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.**

The following policies and procedures work together to support child safety and wellbeing across all of our operations:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaint Handling Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Risk Management
- Child Safe Training

### Supporting Legislation

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (including Child Safe Standards)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) (including reporting to Child Protection)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) (including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences)
- Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic) (including Part XIII – Organisational liability for child abuse)