

# Guide to embedding the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations



## **Acknowledgement**

The material in this guide has been adapted from:

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations © Australian Human Rights Commission 2018

Guide to the Child Safe Standards © Office of the Children's Guardian New South Wales Government 2023

Keeping Our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations © Commonwealth of Australia 2021

# Principle 1

Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.

A leadership team, governance structure and culture committed to child safety and wellbeing helps keep children safe from harm and abuse.

## What does this look like in practice?

- Leadership models and encourages day-to-day behaviours that prioritise children's wellbeing and safety. This includes physical, emotional and cultural safety.
- All staff understand and exhibit behaviour that:
  - supports children's rights
  - meets reporting obligations
  - responds to and reports harm or abuse of children
  - is in line with the organisation's code of conduct.
- Practical guidance, policies and information which promote child safety are publicly displayed.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families are part of the development of service policies and procedures.
- Information is translated into local languages to reflect the diversity of children and families attending the service.
- Information is presented in culturally- and age-appropriate ways.

## Reflecting on your practice

- Do we have a child safe culture in our service? What does it look like day-to-day?
- Do we all have the same understanding about how all staff should behave towards children?
- Is our information about how we promote child safety clear to both families and children?

# Principle 2

Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

A service which listens to children and explains their responsibility to protect them creates an environment where children can discuss abuse and their personal safety.

## What does this look like in practice?

- All staff understand children's rights. Leadership provides training for staff on the rights of children.
- Children are educated on their rights, including their right to safety and to be listened to.
- Staff use culturally appropriate ways of asking children if they feel safe. This includes supporting children to speak in their language.
- Age-appropriate platforms are provided to seek children's views.
- Children are informed about their role in helping to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all attending children.

## Reflecting on your practice

- How do we provide all children with opportunities to share their views?
- How do we support children to understand and describe their feelings to us?
- How do we help children understand their rights?
- Do children understand how adults should behave?

# Principle 3

Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

When parents and communities take part and share their views on a service's practices, it helps keep children safe.

## What does this look like in practice?

- The service talks with families and the community about their child safety approaches and policies.
- The service listens to and actions feedback.
- The service recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family structures are far-reaching. This may include non-Indigenous family members, Elders, and kinship family members.
- The service actively engages and listens to all family members to inform their practices.
- Children are encouraged to help create processes which support their safety and wellbeing.

## Reflecting on your practice

- Do families feel welcome at our service? How do we know? What can we do to support those that don't?
- Are families comfortable asking questions about our practices? How do we know?
- How can we involve families and communities in our organisation?
- How can we ensure we reflect the diversity of our community?

# Principle 4

Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

Children's individual needs, abilities and backgrounds must be respected. This helps reduce discrimination, exclusion, bullying and abuse.

## What does this look like in practice?

- Staff are trained to recognise and help children with diverse needs, abilities and backgrounds.
- Staff learn about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community they work in. This includes reflecting their needs within culturally responsive policies and practices.
- Staff understand the rights of children with disabilities under the Disability Discrimination Act.
- All children are provided with information and support to voice their concerns.
- Information is appropriate to a child's age, developmental stage and needs.

## Reflecting on your practice

- How do we identify children who may be vulnerable and understand their needs?
- How do we ensure we are responding to children's needs?
- What tools do we provide children to support them to communicate their needs?
- How do we respond when children raise a need or concern?
- Do we know how to identify and address inappropriate conduct? This includes racism and/or discrimination.

# Principle 5

People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

A service that has strong recruitment, induction and training practices helps keep children safe.

## What does this look like in practice?

- The service commits to child safety when advertising for, recruiting and screening staff and volunteers.
- Duty statements, selection criteria and referee checks show:
  - that children and young people are valued and respected.
  - a commitment to child safety and wellbeing.
  - an understanding of children's developmental needs and using culturally safe practices.
- Staff and volunteers in organisations have completed background check requirements.
- Potential staff or volunteers are asked questions about their understanding of cultural safety and how they would show this when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
- All staff are inducted and aware of their role in child safety and reporting obligations.
- Ongoing staff support, supervision and performance management processes involve child safety elements.

## Reflecting on your practice

- Do all staff have a current Working With Children Check?
- Have all staff had criminal history and reference checks?
- Does our induction process help staff understand their obligations to child safety?
- How can we support each other to demonstrate child safe practices?

# Principle 6

Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.

Child-focused complaint processes help children and families speak up if a child is mistreated. Effective handling of complaints, prompt investigation and responses prevents further harm or abuse.

## What does this look like in practice?

- Staff know their responsibilities, reporting and privacy obligations for responding to disclosures.
- Leadership provide training as part of induction and professional development processes.
- Staff understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'men's business' and 'women's business'.
- A child may feel more comfortable talking to an adult of the same gender where possible when reporting a concern.
- Complaints are taken seriously, recorded and responded to promptly and thoroughly.

## Reflecting on your practice

- Is our complaints process visible and understood by both children and families?
- Do all staff understand how to record a complaint?
- What are our practices for supporting families who have made a complaint?
- Do adults understand the process and possible outcomes for complaints that are made against them?

# Principle 7

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

A service that provides staff with professional learning and training supports their ability to keep children safe.

## What does this look like in practice?

- Staff and volunteers receive training on:
  - the rights of children regarding records being created about them and their intended use
  - recognising the indicators of child harm
  - the organisation's policies and procedures related to child safety and wellbeing.
- Staff know how generational trauma, colonisation and racism affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Staff support children to feel safe and empowered.

## Reflecting on your practice

- How is staff participation in training recorded? How do we ensure staff's understanding?
- Are staff confident in reporting abuse and inappropriate conduct?
- How do we ensure quality induction occurs for casual and short-term staff?

# Principle 8

Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

A child safe service changes its physical and online spaces to reduce the chances of harm or abuse to children.

## What does this look like in practice?

- Children and families have a say in what they want the physical environment to look like. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and their wider kinship networks.
- Physical environments are set up in a way that supports active supervision of children.
- All children are actively supervised and can be heard where they may not be in direct vision.
- Staff are proactive in identifying and mitigating physical and online risks.
- Children and their families are informed about the use of technology and safety tools in place at the service.
- The highest privacy settings are on when using online environments, to protect children's privacy and safety.

## Reflecting on your practice

- How can the physical environment be altered to increase natural lines of sight and safe supervision?
- Do staff understand the service's policies regarding the safe use of online environments?
- How can children be educated about using devices and online environments?

# Principle 9

Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.

Services use complaints and mistakes as an opportunity to continuously improve the safety of children.

## What does this look like in practice?

- The service invites children, families and community members to help review child safety policies, procedures and practices.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are included in review processes.
- Complaints are regularly analysed to drive continuous improvement of child safety practices.
- Staff are open to feedback on their practices.

## Reflecting on your practice

- Do we update our policies and procedures to reflect current practices, complaints and other feedback?
- Are leadership and staff open to change?
- Do we understand the root cause after a critical incident?

# Principle 10

Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

Services that actively document, understand and implement policies and procedures related to child safety ensure a consistent application of child safety practices across the organisation.

## What does this look like in practice?

- Children and families, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, help shape the service's policies and procedures.
- The service's child safety policy and procedures are in a clear and accessible format that makes it easy for staff, volunteers, children and families to understand.
- Policies and procedures address all 10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.
- Interviews or surveys with children, families, staff, volunteers and community members show they trust and know the organisation's policies and procedures.

## Reflecting on your practice

- Are our policies and procedures specific to our organisation?
- Have we made our policies and procedures accessible for both children and families?
- How do we support staff to understand our policies and procedures?
- Do staff understand what happens if policies and procedures are not followed?