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# STANDARD POLICY

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## **Document Title**

Child Safe Environments

## **Document ID**

SAD-POL-015




### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>1.</b>	<b>DOCUMENT SCOPE .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>POLICY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>PROCEDURE .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>TRAINING .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>INTERNAL/EXTERNAL DOCUMENT REFERENCES/DEPENDENCIES.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>DOCUMENT AUTHORISATION.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>ASSOCIATED FORMS .....</b>	<b>8</b>

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 Page 2 of 8

## 1. DOCUMENT SCOPE

This policy applies to all Officers, Employees, Volunteers and Students engaged in the delivery of activities by The Salvation Army, South Australia Division.

It also applies to all contractors and other organisations funded by The Salvation Army including:

- Individually contracted advisers/consultants to The Salvation Army in South Australia Division
- Partners, contractors and subcontractors of contractors of The Salvation Army, in South Australia Division.

## 2. POLICY

### **Purpose**

The Salvation Army is committed to upholding child safe environments and has a zero tolerance approach to child abuse. This policy aims to protect children from abuse of all kinds in the delivery of The Salvation Army's activities through the establishment of a consistently applied framework to reduce risk as well as build a child safe, child friendly organisational culture.

### **Commitment to Child Safety**

Every child who participates in the activities of The Salvation Army has a right to be free from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, exploitation, harassment and bullying. The Salvation Army is committed to being a child safe and child friendly organisation, where children and young people feel respected, safe, valued and are encouraged to reach their full potential.

At all times The Salvation Army will act in accordance with the *Children's Protection Act 1993*, including:

- Section 8B – 8D – Child Safe Environments and criminal history assessments for people working with children; and
- Section 11 – Mandatory reporting

The Salvation Army will also act in accordance with *Child Safe Environments: Principles of Good Practice* and *Child Safe Environments: Standards for dealing with information obtained about the criminal history of employees and volunteers who work with children* as issued by the Chief Executive of the Department for Families and Communities.

### **Child Safe Environments Principles**

This Child Safe Environments Policy is guided by the following principles:

#### *Zero Tolerance of Child Abuse*

Child abuse is not tolerated by The Salvation Army. The Salvation Army takes a preventative and proactive approach to managing risks associated with child abuse in the delivery of its activities. The Salvation Army will not knowingly engage, directly or indirectly, anyone who poses an unacceptable risk to children, nor fund any individual or organisation **that does not meet The Salvation Army's child protection compliance standards** in their operations and activities.

#### *A Child Safe, Child Friendly Organisational Culture*

Building an open and aware culture is recognised as integral to preventing child abuse. When an organisation is aware of issues relating to child abuse and encourages open discussion and scrutiny, it becomes more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden. This includes being open to outside scrutiny and accountability, promoting and acting on **children's rights as well as supporting open and honest communication**.

### *Recognition of Children's Rights*

Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child and The Salvation Army is committed to upholding the rights and obligations of the convention. The Salvation Army recognises that some groups of children, for example those living with a disability or living in isolated areas, are particularly vulnerable to human rights violations.

### *Sharing Responsibility for Child Protection*

Creating child safe environments is a dynamic process that involves active participation and responsibility by all sectors of the community including; individuals, families, government and non government organisations and community groups. Sharing responsibility for the care and protection of children helps to develop a stronger, more child focused community. A child safe community can care for all children, identify vulnerable children, support children who have been abused and neglected and prevent further harm to children.

### *A Risk Management Approach*

Careful risk management is recognised as part of child abuse prevention. Identifying, assessing and taking steps to minimise the risk of harm to children can prevent or minimise the incidence of child abuse. This policy introduces risk assessments and treatments for a range of recognised risks to children.

## **3. PROCEDURE**

The following are a complimentary set of strategies to be implemented across The Salvation Army aimed at building child safe and child friendly environments.

### ***Child Safe Environments: Code of Conduct***

Codes of Conduct serve to set out clear behaviours and boundaries for those engaged in the activities of an organisation to limit the risk of child abuse occurring. By setting a clear benchmark of acceptable standards, a Code of Conduct provides direction for anyone working with children as well as promotes safe, positive and child friendly environments.

A ***Child Safe Environments: Code of Conduct*** is provided as Attachment 1 and must be read and adhered to in conjunction with this policy. The ***Child Safe Environments: Code of Conduct*** has two parts. The first part is aimed at Officers, Employees, Volunteers, Students, Contractors, Subcontractors and any other adult involved in the delivery of activities for The Salvation Army. The second part is aimed at children participating in the activities of The Salvation Army.

The ***Child Safe Environments: Code of Conduct*** is to be read in conjunction with The Salvation Army, Southern Territory, ***Employee Code of Conduct***, The Salvation Army South Australia Division, ***Social Programme Code of Ethical Behaviour for Managers, Counsellors, Support Workers, Carers, Administrative Support Workers, Volunteers and Students*** and The Salvation Army, Australia Southern Territory on ***Ethical and Behavioural Standards***.

The Salvation Army has a *Client Services Charter* which describes the standard of service clients can expect as well as their concurring rights and responsibilities as consumers. The Salvation Army is a signatory to the *Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care* and also has an obligation to uphold the rights described in the charter.

## ***Children's Participation***

Abuse is more common in organisations where children have no voice. A child safe organisation empowers children so they can speak up about their concerns and the unique knowledge and experience of children is valued. Children can identify strengths, **weaknesses, risks and dangers in activities that may otherwise go undetected.** Children's participation can mean that more risks are identified, the open and aware culture is expanded and children feel safe to report concerns and abuse.

As part of The Salvation Army organisational culture, children will be actively encouraged and empowered to raise concerns and discuss issues. All Officers, Employees, Volunteers, **Students and others engaged in the delivery of The Salvation Army's activities will** encourage children to express their views and make suggestions, especially on matters that **directly affect them. This includes decisions about children's** care by and involvement with The Salvation Army's services as well as their participation in service planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This is in accordance with The Salvation Army *Consumer and Community Participation Policy*.

All Officers, Employees, Volunteers, Students and others engaged in the delivery of The **Salvation Army's activities will teach children about what they can do if they feel unsafe** as well as listen to and act on any concerns raised by children or their care givers. The Salvation Army Client and Community Feedback Policy is actively promoted and provides a course for redress in instances of grievance or complaint.

## ***Recruitment and Selection***

The Salvation Army takes all reasonable steps to ensure it engages the most suitable and appropriate Officers, Employees, Volunteers, Students and others to work with children or **have access to children's records. This is achieved by using a range of screening measures** aimed at minimising the likelihood of engaging or retaining people who are unsuitable to work with children or young people.

When a criminal history assessment is required by law, satisfactory criminal history assessments must be conducted for all persons undertaking *prescribed functions* at least every three years. *Prescribed functions* are those defined within the *Children's Protection Act 1993* Section 8B (8) and involve any of the following:

- Regular contact with children or working in close proximity to children on a regular basis.
- Supervision or management of persons in positions requiring or involving regular contact with children or working in close proximity to children on a regular basis.
- Access to records relating to children.

Criminal history assessments and information will be dealt with in accordance with the standards developed by the Chief Executive, Department for Families and Communities, *Child Safe Environments: Dealing with information obtained about the criminal history of employees and volunteers who work with children*.

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***Support, Supervision and Professional Development***

The Salvation Army will provide opportunities for Officers, Employees, Volunteers, Students and others engaged in the delivery of its services to develop and maintain the necessary skills and understanding to promote child safe environments.

The Salvation Army will ensure that Officers, Employees, Volunteers, Students and others **who work with children or have access to children's records have ongoing supervision, support and training** to ensure that their performance is enhanced to promote the establishment and maintenance of a child safe environment.

***Reporting and Responding to Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect***

All Officers, Employees, Volunteers, Students and other individuals engaged in activities of The Salvation Army who are Mandated Notifiers under Section 11 of the **Children's Protection Act 1993** have a legal obligation to make a notification to the Child Abuse Report Line as soon as practicable when they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child has been or is being abused or neglected.

The law imposes liability on mandated notifiers who fail to report suspected child abuse. It is also an offence to threaten or intimidate, or cause loss, damage or disadvantage to a mandated notifier because the person has discharged, or proposes to discharge, his or her duty to notify suspected abuse or neglect.

The Salvation Army has an obligation to ensure that Officers, Employees, Volunteers, Students and other relevant individuals are provided with sufficient information and training to exercise their responsibilities under the **Children's Protection Act 1993**.

The Salvation Army will ensure relevant Officers, Employees, Volunteers, Students and other individuals complete **Child Safe Environments: Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect** training within three months of commencing with The Salvation Army and refresher training every three years.

***Harassment and Bullying***

The Salvation Army is committed to providing an environment free from all forms of bullying, harassment and discrimination. The **Prevention of Harassment, Discrimination and Bullying Policy** provides direction on the standard of behaviour and conduct expected of **individuals engaged in the delivery of The Salvation Army's activities as well as a course of redress for grievances**. Designated bullying, harassment and discrimination Contact Officers or Line Managers exist as a first point of contact to raise any concerns or issues within the organisation.

***Communication***

The following core set of tools will be used to communicate information about Child Safe Environments.

- Lotus Notes Email
- Divisional Newsletters
- Divisional Information Portal
- Induction for all Officers, Employees, Volunteers, Students and others engaged in work with children

- Business Days for Officers and Management

## **Risk Management**

The Salvation Army is committed to a risk management approach to prevent and minimise the risk of child abuse or harm to children engaged in its activities. Within The Salvation Army, risk is managed in accordance to its Human Resource, Occupational, Health, Safety and Welfare as well as Risk Management policies.

The Salvation Army has (in development) a ***Child Safe Environments: Risk Management Strategy*** which aims to identify, assess and put in place steps to actively address risks to children engaged in its activities.

## **Definitions**

In the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

**Abuse or neglect** refers to

- Sexual abuse of a child or
- Physical or emotional abuse of a child, or neglect of the child, to the extent that either:

The child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, physical or psychological injury **detrimental to the child's wellbeing.**

**The child's physical or psychological development is in jeopardy.**

**At risk** refers to

- Situations where there is significant risk that a child will suffer serious harm to his or her physical, psychological emotional well being against which he or she should have, but does not have, proper protection.

**Bullying** occurs when somebody who is less powerful than another person or a group is deliberately and typically repeatedly harmed.

**Child** refers to a person under 18 years of age.

**Guardianship or Custody of the Minister** refers to

- Any child placed under a Care and Protection Order by the Youth Court in accordance with section 38 of the **Children's Protection Act 1993**, these are:

12 month Guardianship orders, granted under section 38 1 (c)

Guardianship until 18 years of age, granted under section 38 1 (d)

12 month custody orders, granted under section 38 1 (b)

**Mandated Notifier** refers to individuals required to notify suspicions of abuse under section 11 (2) of the **Children's Protection Act 1993**.

## **4. TRAINING**

The Salvation Army will ensure relevant Officers, Employees, Volunteers, Students and other individuals complete ***Child Safe Environments: Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect*** training within three months of commencing with The Salvation Army and refresher training every three years.

Bullying and harassment training is mandatory for all Line Managers or Supervisors of The Salvation Army's Employees and Volunteers.

## 5. INTERNAL/EXTERNAL DOCUMENT REFERENCES/DEPENDENCIES

- *Children's Protection Act 1993*
- *Child Safe Environments: Principles of Good Practice*
- *Child Safe Environments: Standards for dealing with information obtained about the criminal history of employees and volunteers who work with children*
- *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child*
- *Child Safe Environments: Code of Conduct*
- *Employee Code of Conduct*
- *Social Programme Code of Ethical Behaviour for Managers, Counsellors, Support Workers, Carers, Administrative Support Workers, Volunteers and Students*
- *Ethical and Behavioural Standards Policy*
- *Client Services Charter*
- *Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care*
- *Consumer and Community Participation Policy.*
- *Client and Community Feedback Policy*
- *Prevention of Harassment, Discrimination and Bullying Policy*

## 6. DOCUMENT AUTHORISATION

### Authorisation:

On the recommendation of the South Australia Divisional Expenditure Board on 24 November 2009 this document is issued on the instruction of the Divisional Commander.



Gordon Jones (Major)

**Divisional Secretary**

30<sup>th</sup> September 2011

## 7. ASSOCIATED FORMS

Attachment 1 : Child Safe Environments Code of Conduct