



Child Safe Policy

Purpose of this policy

Thrive Counselling and Consultancy has developed this policy in acknowledgement that all children and young people have a right to be safe, to be protected and to be heard. As an organisation and a sole clinician, I have a duty of care to keep children safe and protect them from harm.

This policy demonstrates a committed to child safety and outlines the principles, scope and actions that are required to ensure that all children who engage in a service with Thrive Counselling and Consultancy's sole clinician, are kept safe and their rights are upheld.

Our children

This policy is intended to empower children, who are vital and active participants at Thrive Counselling and Consultancy. I involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. I listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

I promote diversity and acceptance at Thrive Counselling and Consultancy, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular, I:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

Commitment to child safety

As the sole clinician of Thrive Counselling and Consultancy, I am committed to child safety and are guided by the following:

- Children and Young People (Safety) Act of 2017), and the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016
- United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child <https://www.unicef.org.au/our-work/information-for-children/un-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child>
- Keeping Our Kids Safe: <https://www.snaicc.org.au/policy-and-research/child-safety-and-wellbeing/keeping-our-kids-safe/>
- Mandatory Reporting Information Booklet: https://dhs.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/103179/CSE-Mandatory-notification-information-booklet.PDF
- Child Wellbeing and Protection standards <https://www.aasw.asn.au/document/item/2215>



- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations:
https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/National_Principles_for_Child_Safe_Organisations2019.pdf

Guiding principles include:

- I want children to be safe, happy and empowered.
- I support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- I am committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- I have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- I have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- I am is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- I am committed to regularly training and education on child abuse risks.
- I am committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

Scope

As a sole clinician this policy applies to my role as a Mental Health Social Worker in private practice. The policy will be reviewed should Thrive Counselling and Consultancy engage in recruitment of additional staff.

Communication

As per Chapter 8 (Section 114(5)) of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act of 2017, I must provide, on request, a copy of any child safe policies and procedures prepared for or adopted by Thrive Counselling and Consultancy to clients including children and young people, their families and potential future employees.

This information is communicated via Thrive Counselling and Consultancy's front page of its website alongside appropriate posters displayed in waiting areas. Children, young people and parents/guardians are provided with a service information sheet on intake and the child safe policy is noted in the consent form which is provided to the parent/guardian on induction. This information is discussed with the child/ young person and parent at the first session and clients are made aware that they can ask for further information, provide feedback or make a complaint at any time.



Participation of families, children and young people

Through the induction process, families, children and young people are made aware of their right to participate in all aspects of the service they are receiving. This includes understanding their rights and responsibilities, the clinician's rights and responsibilities, provision of feedback and how to raise complaints and concerns.

These processes are made accessible through the provision of a child friendly information sheet, information contained in the consent form, client feedback box in reception, feedback and complaints information provided at induction, children's rights posters in the waiting area and information display on the front page of Thrive Counselling and Consultancy's website.

Code of Conduct

As the sole clinician of Thrive Counselling and Consultancy, I abide by a code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children. This is available on the Thrive Counselling and Consultancy website or on request.

Staffing

This policy guides the sole clinician on how to behave with children at Thrive Counselling and Consultancy.

Training and supervision

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone at Thrive Counselling and Consultancy understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

The culture I am creating at Thrive Counselling and Consultancy aims for future staff, families and children to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. I am trained to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

Ongoing supervision is compulsory to develop skills to protect children from abuse and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

I participate in regular supervision to ensure I understand my professional commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse. This will include checking that my behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Recruitment and screening:

All staff who are engaged in child-related work are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this check.

As a sole clinician and accredited Mental Health Social Worker, I abide by the code of conduct, screening and standards set out by the AASW. See Child Wellbeing and Protection standards <https://www.aasw.asn.au/document/item/2215>. I have up to date working with children's check, vulnerable person's check and national police screening, alongside AASW registration and membership.



Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, families or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it and who will have access to it. This is intended to protect reporters and to ensure that all members/clients of Thrive Counselling and Consultancy are comfortable to disclose any allegations or concerns in relation to child safety without repercussions.

Reporting and responding to risk of harm

As a sole clinician of Thrive Counselling and Consultancy I take my legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- Failure to disclose: All adults in South Australia who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to South Australia Police and CARL on 13 14 78
- Mandatory reporting: As a sole clinician and a mandatory reporter I must comply with my duties as set out in the legislation: Section 31 of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017.
- Failure to protect: As a sole clinician and person of authority for Thrive Counselling and Consultancy, will commit an offence if I know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Duty of care: If a child is abused by an individual associated with Thrive Counselling and Consultancy, or my role as a sole clinician, I will be presumed to have breached its duty of care unless it can prove that it took 'reasonable precautions' to prevent the abuse in question.

Actions

- If, in my role as a sole clinician, I am made aware of, or have information disclosed to me that a child or young person is at risk of harm, I must contact CARL immediately and document the information on Thrive Counselling and Consultancy's secure database. If the child is at immediate risk and the child is in proximity, I have a duty of care and must take reasonable steps to protect the child, including by contacting the South Australian police and informing the safe parent/guardian of the child where appropriate.
- If a child or young person discloses abuse, I have a duty of care to ensure the child receives adequate support and care post disclosure. This may include supporting the child as part of continuation of therapeutic services, including monitoring the child's circumstances, referral to appropriate services and/or provision of additional support numbers of the child and safe parent/guardian outside of service engagement.

Responding to complaints and feedback

Feedback and or complaints will be taken seriously and responded to in a timely manner. This includes:



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- Listening to the complaint/feedback and recording the details of the feedback/complaint
 - Responding to the claimant with an outcome
 - Clearly documenting and storing decisions and actions taken in response to the complaint and or feedback
 - Ensure all responses follow the code of conduct, professional standards, legislative requirements and children's rights.
 - Actions also include weekly checking of the feedback box, responding to emails and or direct complaints within 48 hours.
 - If the feedback or complain is of a serious nature, the response will occur immediately where required and appropriate.

Risk management

In South Australia, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, I proactively manage risks of abuse to children.

I have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks which include risks posed by physical environments and online environments.

Strategies include:

Use of child safe space and materials including:

- minimising obstructions and sharp edges where possible,
- toxic cleaning products kept out of reach of children
- children are supervised by a parent/ guardian in the waiting area and at times in sessions where appropriate and required
- all materials used for therapeutic intervention are child friendly and non-toxic
- toys and child friendly tools are used in session to support the child/young person to express their needs/concerns.
- No access to social media or internet in sessions
- No photos/digital images are taken of children in sessions or in the production of marketing material.
- No transportation of children
- Documentation of risks, issues of concern when required.
- Privacy and confidentiality guidelines are maintained
- Concerns are raised with the safe parent or guardian as required.
- Children and young people are often provided services in spaces without a parent of guardian – risk of harm is minimised by the parent/guardian remaining on premises. The child/young person understands they have the right to have the parent/guardian



in the counselling room at any time they wish or may leave the counselling room at any time.

- The sole clinician must not touch the child in the course of intervention and where somatic work may take place, the use of props such as cushions and toys will be used in lieu of physical touch.
- If the child seeks physical comfort from the clinician, the clinician acknowledges and direct the child to safe touch such as high five or side arm touch and reports this contact to the parent upon completion of the session.
- Online telehealth services are provided only with parent/guardian in close proximity ensuring the child is safe, I as the clinician can contact the parent/guardian at any time should concerns be raised for the safety of the child or young persons in session. All telehealth sessions include informing the child/young person of their rights and how to keep safe online.

Risks are assessed the following ways:

- Psychosocial and familial assessment
- Observational and interview in sessions
- Professional judgement
- Child/young person and parental feedback
- Engagement in supervision sessions to monitor and develop safe practice
- Regular site audits to ensure the space is child safe and child friendly

Allegations, concerns and complaints

I work to ensure all children and families, know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

I have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if I have a reasonable belief that an incident took place. If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may include:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. I will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible I will



Thrive

Counselling and Consultancy

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do my best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

Section 115 of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 requires Thrive Counselling and Consultancy to review its child safe environments policies and procedures at least once every five years. Thrive Counselling and Consultancy may also wish to review the policy when:

- new or added risks are identified for children or young people, which may require a change in the policy or procedures
- a critical incident where a child or young person has experienced harm through involvement in the organisation
- concerns are raised by anyone involved in your organisation about child safety or welfare in the organisation
- awareness or compliance to the child safe policy and/or procedures is low.

Each time you review and update your child safe environments policies and procedures, you must create a new lodgement in the Child Safe Environments Compliance System on the Department of Human Services website. See: www.dhs.sa.gov.au/cse

I, Mandy Flint – Mental Health Social Worker, agree to abide by Thrive Counselling and Consultancy's Child Safe Policy:

Signed:

Date: 4th January 2022

Review due: 4th January 2024