

### Introduction

South West Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS) is committed to providing a safe, respectful and culturally secure environment for all children and young people. We have zero tolerance for any form of abuse or neglect. Safeguarding is embedded across our leadership, governance, workforce and everyday practice.

This policy outlines how SWAMS keeps children and young people safe; the responsibilities of our personnel; and the processes that ensure risks are identified, concerns are reported, and care remains child-centred at all times.

### Purpose and Scope

Purpose:

- To ensure all children and young people accessing SWAMS are safe, supported and protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and harm.
- To define the behaviour, responsibilities and reporting requirements of all SWAMS personnel.
- To embed the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations into our systems, culture and service delivery.

Scope:

Applies to all SWAMS personnel, including employees, contractors, volunteers, students, Board and Committee members, across all services, locations, programs, events, digital platforms and community environments.

### Responsibilities

The following job roles are responsible for ownership and implementation of this Policy:

- Board of Directors
- Chief Executive Officer
- Directors, Managers and Coordinators
- Child Safeguarding Committee

These roles are responsible for supporting implementation and ensuring compliance across the workforce:

- Human Resources
- Quality & Risk Team
- All personnel (employees, volunteers, contractors, students)

### Policy

#### 1. Guiding Values

- This Policy is formally endorsed by the SWAMS Board of Directors, who demonstrate visible leadership and oversight of safeguarding children and young people across the organisation.
- Safeguarding is a shared responsibility.
- SWAMS has zero tolerance for abuse or neglect.
- The best interests of the child come first.
- We act with accountability, transparency and cultural safety.
- Children and young people are supported to understand their rights and participate in decisions affecting them.
- We recognise and respond to diverse needs, including Aboriginal children, children with disability, culturally diverse backgrounds, LGBTQI+ young people, and those unable to live at home.

#### 2. Safe People: Recruitment, Screening, Induction and Training

- All recruitment clearly states our safeguarding commitment.
- Screening includes identity checks, Working with Children Check, National Police Check, qualifications and two professional references with child-safety questions.
- Personnel must disclose charges or convictions relevant to suitability.
- New personnel receive safeguarding induction including:
  - Understanding what it means to work in a child safe organisation – following The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations;
  - Understanding what each person’s safeguarding responsibilities are at SWAMS;
  - Knowing how and when to report concerns.
- Annual training is mandatory and includes annual acknowledgement of:
  - Safeguarding our Children and Young People Policy;
  - AMSED Training Modules x 2 (Child Protection: Mandatory Reporting | Child Protection: The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations);
  - Mandatory Reporting Training;
  - Other training as requested and required (this may include Trauma Informed Care or Trauma – Transformative Practice with Children if you are working in the Out of Home Care, Family Support Service, Home Stretch, Mental Health, Alcohol & Other Drugs, Primary or Allied Health Professional, Maternal and Child Health Teams).

### 3. Safe Environments

- Physical, cultural, psychological and online risks are identified and managed.
- Photos/recordings require informed consent, with permission documented before use.
- All visitors, volunteers, students and contractors follow SWAMS safety and supervision requirements.
- Children and young people are offered a guardian/chaperone for appointments.
- Clinics and community spaces are welcoming, inclusive and child-friendly.

### 4. Listening, Participation and Partnering with Families

- Children and young people are informed of their rights in accessible, age-appropriate ways.
- Their views and feedback shape services and decision-making.
- Families and communities are informed about SWAMS' safeguarding commitment and involved through feedback mechanisms and engagement groups.

### 5. Reporting and Responding to Concerns

- All personnel must immediately report any concern, suspicion, disclosure or incident of harm.
- Mandatory reporting requirements must be met for all relevant roles.
- Potentially criminal conduct must be reported to WA Police without delay.
- Staff must follow the SWAMS Reporting Policy and document all concerns factually.
- Responses prioritise the child's safety, dignity, privacy and cultural needs.
- Retaliation, victimisation or minimisation of disclosures is not permitted.

### 6. Governance, Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

- The Child Safeguarding Committee oversees policy implementation, reviews and improvement activities.
- The policy is reviewed at least every three years or earlier if legislation, incidents or organisational changes require it.
- Records of incidents, reviews and improvements are maintained.
- A formal child safeguarding audit schedule forms part of SWAMS' Quality Management Framework and is implemented at least annually.
- Audit outcomes, trends and corrective actions are documented in Logiqc and monitored to completion.

### 7. National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children are suitable and supported to reflect child safety values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child-focused.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and minimise harm.
9. Implementation of the National Principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

#### Linked Policies and Procedures

- Code of Conduct doc\_0242
- Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct Policy doc\_1011
- Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct Procedure doc\_1012
- Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct Quick Reference doc\_1013
- Recruitment Policy doc\_0230
- Client Feedback and Complaints Policy doc\_0117
- Respectful and Culturally Appropriate Care Policy doc\_0212
- Workplace Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy doc\_0119
- Photograph and Recordings Protocol doc\_0179

#### Linked Supporting Documents

- Leadership Statement of Commitment to Child Safety rec\_0005
- Kwaba Bidi Governance Framework doc\_0863
- Definitions Appendix - below
- SWAMS Website - [Commitments - South West Aboriginal Medical Service](#)

### Resources

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Child Safe Standards (Royal Commission)
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (AHRC)
- WA Working with Children Check guidance
- eSafety Commission guidelines
- Australian Childhood Foundation

### Appendix

#### **Bullying**

Repeated misuse of power that causes harm to a less powerful person or group. It may be verbal (name-calling, threats), physical (hitting, kicking), social (excluding, ignoring) or psychological (rumours, intimidation, damaging property).

#### **Child or young person**

A person under 18 years of age.

#### **Code of Conduct**

A document outlining acceptable and unacceptable behaviour when working with or engaging with children and young people, designed to prevent harm.

#### **Emotional or psychological abuse**

Actions that harm a child's emotional or social development, such as constant criticism, rejection, threats, or persistent cold or hostile behaviour.

#### **Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence**

Violence between family members or those in a family-like relationship. Children may experience harm by witnessing violence or its consequences.

#### **Grooming**

Behaviours used to build trust with a child or their caregivers for the purpose of abuse. This can occur in person or online and may happen gradually or quickly.

#### **Harm**

Any significant negative impact on a child's physical, emotional or psychological wellbeing, caused by abuse, neglect, exploitation or a single or repeated action/omission.

#### **LGBTQI+**

An acronym referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people.

### **National Principles for Child Safe Organisations**

A national framework endorsed by Australian governments outlining 10 principles for creating safe environments for children and young people.

### **Neglect**

Failure to provide a child with essential needs such as food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical care or education, placing their development or safety at risk.

### **Online environment**

Any digital space that enables communication, such as social media, messaging apps, email, games and live-streaming platforms.

### **Personnel**

Anyone working for SWAMS in a paid or unpaid capacity, including employees, Board and Committee members, contractors and volunteers.

### **Physical abuse**

Non-accidental physical harm such as hitting, shaking, burning, poisoning or dangerous punishment.

### **Risk management**

Identifying and reducing situations where children may be exposed to harm, ensuring safe environments and safe practices.

### **Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse**

A national inquiry (2013–2017) that examined institutional failures to protect children and made recommendations to improve child safety in Australia.