

## **Child Safety Policy**

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### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Purpose**

This Policy and the Policies and Procedures and related documentation set out in section 1.4 below (**Related Documentation**) supports Aardvark Autism Services to apply the VIC Child Safe Standards.

#### **1.2 Policy Aims and Relevant Child Safety Standards**

Aardvark Autism Services aims to demonstrate each of the following through the application of this Policy and the relevant systems, procedures, workflows, and other strategies referred to in this Policy and the Related Documentation:

- (a) Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture;
- (b) Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously;
- (c) Families and communities are informed and involved;
- (d) Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are taken in to account;
- (e) People working with Children are suitable and supported;
- (f) Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused;
- (g) Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep Children safe through continual education and training;
- (h) Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur;
- (i) Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved; and
- (j) Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe.

#### **1.3 Scope**

- (a) This Policy applies to:
  - (1) Clients that are Children.
  - (2) Behaviour technicians, program supervisors, Key Management Personnel and other staff at Aardvark Autism Services who work with Children;
  - (3) anyone involved in the delivery and monitoring of supports and services to Children and includes Workers as well as family and carers and where possible, extends to teachers and volunteers that work with such Children;
  - (4) other service providers who provide services to Children;
  - (5) any other person who interacts with Children, including co-residents or other people with whom those Children and their support networks may be in contact;
  - (6) other professionals who support Children, which may include professionals with backgrounds in medicine, psychiatry, education, allied health or justice.

<b>Approved By:</b> The Board of Aardvark Autism Services Pty Ltd	<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Approval Date:</b> April 2023	<b>Next Scheduled Review</b>	April 2025

- (b) All permanent, fixed term and casual staff, contractors and volunteers are required to take full responsibility for ensuring a full understanding of the commitments outlined in this Policy.
- (c) The relevant persons specified in the column corresponding to a procedure described in this Policy have the responsibility to implement the relevant systems, procedures, workflows and other strategies referred to in the relevant procedure.

**1.4 Related Documentation**

The application of the Child Safe Standards by Aardvark Autism Services is supported in part by and should be read alongside the Policies and Procedures and related documentation referred to in this Policy including without limitation:

- (a) the Child Safe Reporting Policy;
- (b) the Incident Management and Reporting Policy;
- (c) the Feedback and Complaints Management Policy;
- (d) the Information Management Policy; and
- (e) Governance Policy,

and any supporting or operational documents referred to in those policies.

**2. Definitions**

**2.1 Definitions**

**Aardvark Autism Services** means Aardvark Autism Services Pty Ltd ABN 89 665 926 367.

**Child or Children** means a person(s) under the age of 18 that is a Client and any other child that Aardvark Autism Services has mandatory obligations towards under the Child Safe Standards.

**Child Safe Standards** means The Child Safe Standards accepted by the VIC government for making organisations safer for Children.

**Client** means a client of Aardvark Autism Services.

**Guardian** means the legal guardian of the Child.

**Incident** means any:

- (a) act, omission, event or circumstance that:
  - (1) occurs in connection with Aardvark Autism Services and its Workers providing supports or services to a Child; and
  - (2) have, or could have, caused harm to the Child;
- (b) acts by a Child that:
  - (1) occur in connection with providing supports or services to the Child; and
  - (2) have caused serious harm, or a risk of serious harm, to another Child; and

<b>Approved By:</b> The Board of Aardvark Autism Services Pty Ltd	<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Approval Date:</b> April 2023	<b>Next Scheduled Review</b>	April 2025

- (c) allegations and findings of
- (1) sexual offences, sexual misconduct, ill-treatment of a Child;
  - (2) neglect of a Child;
  - (3) an assault against a Child;
  - (4) failure to protect a Child or failure to report if a Child has been harmed; and
  - (5) or any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a Child.

**Key Management Personnel** means Jayne Franklin and other key management personnel involved in Aardvark Autism Services from time to time.

**Legislation Register** means the register of legislation, regulations, rules and guidelines maintained by Aardvark Autism Services.

**Principal** means Jayne Franklin.

**Senior Staff Member** means any senior member of staff at Aardvark Autism Services other than the Principal.

**Worker** means a permanent, fixed term or casual member of staff, a contractor or volunteer employed or otherwise engaged by Aardvark Autism Services and includes the Principal.

### 3. Policy

#### 3.1 Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

- (a) Aardvark Autism Services has a set of core values that inform the organisation's approach to Child safety including as set out in its Policies and Procedures and supporting governance and operational documentation.
- (b) This Policy reflects our public commitment to child safety and the commitment of Key Management Personnel to championing a child safe culture. Our responsibility to child safety is shared at all levels of the organisation.
- (c) All Workers and Key Management Personnel at Aardvark Autism Services are required to demonstrate attitudes and behaviours that prioritise the safety of Children through the behaviours and practices they reward and challenge.
- (d) The Child Safe Code of Conduct is required to be signed by all Workers providing services to Children as well as Key Management Personnel.
- (e) Aardvark Autism Services incorporates risk management of all risks to Children (including child abuse) into decision-making and actively monitors such risks to child safety.
- (f) Aardvark Autism Services encourages day-to-day practices that prioritise Child safety.
- (g) Aardvark Autism Services sets clear expectations around Child safety and ensuring they are followed by Workers.
- (h) Aardvark Autism Services promotes a culture of reporting which is supported in part by the Aardvark Autism Services Child Safe Reporting Policy and Incident Management and Reporting Policy.

<b>Approved By:</b> The Board of Aardvark Autism Services Pty Ltd	<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Approval Date:</b> April 2023	<b>Next Scheduled Review</b>	April 2025

- (i) Workers understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping including as set out in the Information Management Policy, Child Safe Reporting Policy, Incident Management and Reporting Policy and Feedback and Complaints Management Policy.

### 3.2 Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

- (a) Children's participation in decisions affecting their lives is embedded in Aardvark Autism Services' practice through induction, communication and feedback processes including as set out in the Aardvark Autism Services Choice, Advocacy and Control Policy.
- (b) Aardvark Autism Services creates opportunities for Children (in their capacity as Clients) to be included in organisational decision-making in accordance with the Governance Policy.
- (c) Aardvark Autism Services gives Children and their Guardians information on internal and external support services.
- (d) Aardvark Autism Services' Workers are provided with knowledge and skills to support Child participation and access to abuse prevention programs and information.
- (e) Aardvark Autism Services' Workers encourage peer support and friendship for Children.
- (f) Aardvark Autism Services ensures Workers understand what safety means to Children.
- (g) Aardvark Autism Services provides age-appropriate information and training that describes how adults should behave to Children and this behaviour is consistently reinforced.

### 3.3 Families and communities are informed and involved

- (a) Families are acknowledged as having primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their Child and are encouraged by Aardvark Autism Services to take an active role in decisions affecting the Child and keeping Children safe.
- (b) Aardvark Autism Services' Policies and procedures (including the Child Safe Code of Conduct) are clearly communicated to parents and carers.
- (c) Open, two-way communication with families and community members is encouraged by Aardvark Autism Services, including encouraging families to provide feedback on how Aardvark Autism Services should keep Children safe, and this information is acted upon where necessary.
- (d) Families and communities are informed about Aardvark Autism Services' operations and governance.

### 3.4 Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are taken in to account

- (a) Aardvark Autism Services ensures barriers that prevent Children from disclosing abuse or adults from recognising Children's disclosure are understood and actively prevented.
- (b) Aardvark Autism Services ensures the diverse needs, abilities and backgrounds of Children are identified and respected, and the value of treating them fairly and equitably is understood and actively anticipates and responds to those Children with additional vulnerabilities including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and those from CALD backgrounds.
- (c) All Aardvark Autism Services Workers are given information and trained about the factors that increase a Child's vulnerability to harm.

<b>Approved By:</b> The Board of Aardvark Autism Services Pty Ltd	<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Approval Date:</b> April 2023	<b>Next Scheduled Review</b>	April 2025

- (d) All Children have access to information, support and complaint processes including how to make a complaint.
- (e) Aardvark Autism Services' workforce reflects the diversity of the Children it provides services to, where possible.
- (f) Aardvark Autism Services' activities and services are adapted to ensure all Children feel included.

**3.5 People working with Children are suitable and supported**

- (a) Aardvark Autism Services' recruitment process does not rely solely on the working with children check and ongoing training opportunities are encouraged for all Workers including in accordance with the Aardvark Autism Services Human Resources Management Policy.
- (b) Aardvark Autism Services ensures Key Management Personnel are trained in child-safe recruitment practices.
- (c) Aardvark Autism Services' recruitment includes identification of the importance of Child safety.
- (d) Aardvark Autism Services' recruitment processes involve a range of interview questions to establish Worker suitability.
- (e) Aardvark Autism Services ensures background and reference checks are carried out and recorded.
- (f) Aardvark Autism Services' supervision procedures include regular reviews to check whether Workers are following this Policy, the Child Safe Code of Conduct and the Child Safe Reporting Policy.
- (g) Aardvark Autism Services ensures Workers, families and the community are aware of recruitment and other child-safe human resource practices.

**3.6 Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused;**

- (a) Aardvark Autism Services maintains a culture where complaints are taken seriously, and all adults take responsibility for the safety of Children.
- (b) Aardvark Autism Services ensures breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct will result in disciplinary action.
- (c) Aardvark Autism Services gives Workers support and information on what and how to report, including to external bodies.
- (d) Aardvark Autism Services has a Feedback and Complaints Management Policy to enable Children, Workers and others to make complaints.
- (e) Aardvark Autism Services complaints procedures describe likely time frames, review processes and potential outcomes of complaints.
- (f) Aardvark Autism Services will ensure Complaints are handled confidentially.
- (g) Aardvark Autism Services' procedures are reviewed at regular intervals and after complaints are made.
- (h) Aardvark Autism Services' complaint handling procedures are publicly available upon request.
- (i) Aardvark Autism Services' offers its Workers a variety of learning strategies.

<b>Approved By:</b> The Board of Aardvark Autism Services Pty Ltd	<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Approval Date:</b> April 2023	<b>Next Scheduled Review</b>	April 2025

- (j) Aardvark Autism Services ensures its documents are confidential where required.

**3.7 Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep Children safe, through continual education and training**

- (a) Aardvark Autism Services provides ongoing education and training opportunities for all Workers.
- (b) Aardvark Autism Services ensures its training provides Workers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to prevent and identify abuse, and to respond to complaints.
- (c) Aardvark Autism Services ensures Workers who are involved in roles and situations with higher risk are provided more advanced training opportunities.
- (d) Aardvark Autism Services' Principal and Key Management Personnel are responsible for ensuring Workers are properly trained.
- (e) Aardvark Autism Services ensures specialised training is provided to Workers working in high-risk situations or with vulnerable Children.
- (f) Aardvark Autism Services' training practices are regularly reviewed in response to emerging best practices.
- (g) Aardvark Autism Services encourages attendance to conferences and other forums to learn about improvements in Child safe practices.

**3.8 Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse or other kinds of harm to occur.**

- (a) Aardvark Autism Services ensures clear expectations about behavioural standards are set for Workers interacting with Children in physical and online environments.
- (b) Aardvark Autism Services ensures completion of risk assessments to identify areas where adults have opportunities to interact with Children unsupervised, including for one-off events and overnight camps.
- (c) Aardvark Autism Services endeavours to ensure physical work environments are altered to increase natural lines of sight while respecting a Child's right to privacy.
- (d) Aardvark Autism Services will ensure Higher-risk areas such as change rooms, cars, boarding facilities and offsite locations are managed using specific safety measures, such as spot checks and log books.
- (e) Aardvark Autism Services will ensure Children are provided information about online safety and are regularly encouraged to tell Aardvark Autism Services Workers about any negative experiences.
- (f) Aardvark Autism Services will ensure Workers and Guardians are provided information about risks in the online environment, such as online grooming, cyberbullying and sexting.

**3.9 Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved**

- (a) Aardvark Autism Services maintains a culture of continuous improvement to ensure that policies and procedures are implemented and routinely reviewed even though staffing may change.
- (b) Aardvark Autism Services procedures encourage continuous monitoring, open conversations and exploring new ways to keep Children safe.
- (c) Aardvark Autism Services' Child safe policies and practices are regularly reviewed.

<b>Approved By:</b> The Board of Aardvark Autism Services Pty Ltd	<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Approval Date:</b> April 2023	<b>Next Scheduled Review</b>	April 2025

- (d) Aardvark Autism Services refers to the Child Safe Standards when creating, reviewing or evaluating this Policy and other Related Documentation or organisational policies and procedures directed at ensuring child safety.
- (e) Aardvark Autism Services will ensure critical Incidents are reviewed to identify the root cause of the problem, identify risks to the safety of Children and make improvements.
- (f) Aardvark Autism Services will support Children to provide feedback and ensure the information provided is acted on.

**3.10 Policies and procedures document how the organisation is Child-safe**

- (a) This Policy is implemented in a manner that is specific to the service delivery environment, and ensures it addresses local risks to the safety of Children.
- (b) Aardvark Autism Services' Child safe policies, Child Safe Code of Conduct and Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Management Policy (and summaries thereof) are publicly accessible upon request.
- (c) Aardvark Autism Services' Workers are trained to follow this Policy and Related Documentation.
- (d) All Aardvark Autism Services documents are saved in accordance with VIC record keeping requirements which are reflected in the Information Management Policy.

<b>Approved By:</b> The Board of Aardvark Autism Services Pty Ltd	<b>Version</b>	1
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