

Regional Housing Limited

QP 2015: CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Outline Regional Housing Limited's commitment to maintaining child and youth safe environments across our organisation
- Demonstrate the commitment of RHL to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, and to ensure that this commitment is embedded within our organisation's culture, reflected in our policies and procedures and understood and practiced at all levels of the organisation
- To inform Directors, employees and volunteers of their obligation to act ethically towards children and of their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people; and
- Document the key components and underlying principles of RHL's approach to promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, in accordance with principles and standards of best practice, and our legal and regulatory responsibilities

2.0 SCOPE

2.1 This policy applies to all RHL directors, employees and volunteers in relation to all activities in the organisation which involve, result in or relate to contact with children and young people.

3.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.1 Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

3.1.1 All children and young people have a right to feel safe, and to be safe at all times. RHL will not tolerate any abuse or neglect of children or young people involved with our services.

3.1.2 RHL is committed to upholding and protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people accessing our services. A child safe culture is embedded throughout the organisation through the development and implementation of:

- Policies, procedures and related document which uphold the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- Child Safe Code of Conduct specifically addressing conduct of RHL Directors, staff and volunteers when interacting with children and young people.
- Staff training relating to child safety and wellbeing

3.1.3 Safeguarding children and young people is the responsibility of all RHL staff and Directors of RHL.

3.1.4 RHL makes a public commitment to child safety and wellbeing through the following methods:

- Making this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy available to customers and the community via RHL's website
- Customer newsletters
- Annual Reports
- Posters displayed in reception areas of all RHL offices.

3.2 Taking Child Participation Seriously

- 3.2.1 RHL will consistently promote a child and youth safe, inclusive culture that places a high priority on ensuring our service environments promote the empowerment and participation of all children and young people, including those with particular needs and vulnerabilities.
- 3.2.2 RHL staff must ensure that all children and young people who access our services are aware of, and understand, their rights and responsibilities, and are supported to exercise these rights and responsibilities via relevant processes.
- 3.2.3 In accordance with RHL's Privacy Policy and Procedure, children and young people must be informed when they access our services, as appropriate to their age and level of understanding, about how their personal information will be managed and how their privacy rights will be respected. This includes informing the child/young person about when it becomes our legal obligation to share their information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations, should their safety and wellbeing be considered at risk

3.3 Involving Families and Communities

- 3.3.1 RHL staff will promote this Policy and make it readily accessible, in the relevant format, to any child, young person, parent, carer or other stakeholder to ensure a clear understanding of our commitment to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who access our services.
- 3.3.2 When required, other service-specific child safe and child friendly procedures are also to be made available.
- 3.3.3 Where relevant, RHL staff will encourage families to participate in decisions affecting their child/ren, where it will not compromise the safety of the child or young person
- 3.3.4 RHL staff will engage with families and communities and listen to their views in relation to our child and youth safe practices, policies and procedures. Information shared will help inform our practices and procedures.

3.4 Respecting Equity and Diversity

- 3.4.1 RHL aims to create an environment where children and young people's diverse circumstances are recognised and respected, and children feel safe, welcome and included.
- 3.4.2 RHL staff will inclusive and empowering language, which is accessible, takes account of language and literacy levels and cultural differences and is easy for children and young people to understand.
- 3.4.3 RHL values diversity, will not tolerate any discriminatory practices and promote the participation of all children and young people engaged with our services. RHL staff will identify and address any barriers for children and young people that may limit their participation
- 3.4.4 RHL staff will develop and implement strategies to support engagement with children and young people with high or complex needs.

- 3.4.5 RHL child and youth safe policies and procedures are culturally secure and promote the active participation and engagement of First Nations children, young people and families.
- 3.4.6 RHL child and youth safe policies and procedures are culturally secure and promote the active participation and engagement of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse children, young people and families.

3.5 Ensuring Staff are Suitable and Supported

- 3.5.1 RHL will apply rigorous recruitment, screening and selection processes which are in accordance with the Fair Work Act, and will ensure staff are appropriately qualified, skilled and experienced to competently and safely deliver high quality services to children and young people (**refer QP/OP 6004 Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure**).
- 3.5.2 The advertisement for each employment position at RHL will clearly state our commitment as an organisation to child and youth safety and wellbeing.
- 3.5.3 RHL's Role and Responsibility Statements will clearly define the vision and mission of the organisation, the position objective, primary duties, core behavioural competencies, core organisational values, selection criteria and both essential and desirable skills and qualifications of the position incumbent.
- 3.5.4 RHL will uphold a focus on the safety of children and young people throughout the recruitment, suitability and screening process, through the verification of identity, qualifications and professional experience.
- 3.5.5 All prospective RHL Directors, employees and volunteers must complete a formal background check including a National Criminal History Check and Blue Card Working with Children Check.
- 3.5.6 RHL staff must ensure they comply with their relevant state or territory legislative obligations as an employer, employee or volunteer with regard to Blue Card Working with Children Checks.
- 3.5.7 RHL has developed a Child Safety Code of Conduct which all directors and staff must sign upon commencement of their duties and annually.
- 3.5.8 Specific induction and training is provided to RHL Directors. This covers the particular responsibilities of the Board that are outlined within the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.
- 3.5.9 New employees and volunteers of RHL participate in a comprehensive induction and orientation process, which includes child and youth safe policies, procedures and practices. Line Managers will ensure new employees and volunteers complete all relevant mandatory training in accordance with our organisational requirements.

3.6 Child Focused Complaint Systems

- 3.6.1 RHL staff must provide information on the feedback and complaints process in an appropriate and accessible format to children and young people when they access RHL's services.

- 3.6.2 Children and young people who access RHL's services will be provided with information about other agencies or persons that they can raise concerns with and who are able to support them, or advocate on their behalf.
- 5.6.3 RHL's complaints and appeals processes include detailed roles and responsibilities, escalation points, accessibility and reporting requirements. RHL staff will ensure all complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and with procedural fairness. Where necessary, changes will be made to policy and /pr procedure as a result of a complaint (**refer QP/OP 1003: Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure**).

3.7 Staff Knowledge, skills and awareness

- 3.7.1 RHL builds the capability of our staff through professional development, supervision and support, to promote and maintain a child and youth safe organisation (**refer QP/OP 6009 Professional Development and Performance Assessment Policy and Procedure**).
- 3.7.2 RHL is committed to the provision of high-quality supervision practices for all staff encompassing regular reviews of workplace performance and behavioural competencies as part of a six-monthly Performance Assessment (**refer QP/OP 6009 Professional Development and Performance Assessment Policy and Procedure**).
- 3.7.3 RHL implements specific child safety and wellbeing training relating to this policy and related procedures and practices upon commencement of duties and at least annually for all staff and Directors.

3.8 Safe Physical and Online Environments

- 3.8.1 RHL staff are responsible for embedding a culture of risk management across our organisation through the demonstration of high level awareness, acceptance and support of risk management (**refer QP 9015 Risk Management Policy**).
- 3.8.2 Our staff must abide by any program or activity-specific guidance outlined in risk management plans when undertaking specific practices involving children and young people.
- 3.8.3 Risk assessments for residents/guests, activities and events at our services, sites or other locations must be conducted in accordance with RHL's Risk Management Policy. RHL staff will identify and address actions required to minimise risks to children and young people, during routine, new or high risk activities.
- 3.8.4 RHL must take all allegations or disclosures of abuse or neglect seriously, respond appropriately and report concerns to the relevant authorities (**refer QP/OP 1029 Preventing and Responding to Alleged Abuse of Vulnerable Persons Policy and Procedure; QP 2012 Notifications Policy**).
- 3.8.5 RHL staff will complete ongoing training on managing risks and creating safe environments, to ensure the safety, suitability and security of physical environments for children and young people in our services, centres and programs.
- 3.8.6 Staff are to be educated about expectations of online behaviour and, where relevant, how to identify and mitigate risks in the online environment. The online environment will be used in accordance with RHL's Code of Conduct, Child

Safety Code of Conduct and Social Media Policy and Procedure (**refer QP/OP 6015 Social Media Policy and Procedure**).

- 3.8.7 RHL staff must implement any procedures in relation to people visiting services to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people when they have visitors.

3.9 Review of Child Safe Policies and Procedure

- 3.9.1 RHL is committed to strengthening, embedding and maintaining an organisation-wide child and youth safe culture through a process of ongoing continuous improvement.
- 3.9.2 RHL will implement an ongoing cycle of assessment, action and reflection including regular review of policies and practices to ensure child and youth safe policies and practices are understood and embedded at all levels of the organisation.
- 3.9.3 Incidents and complaints will be critically reviewed to: identify trends; identify and manage risks and systemic issues; and improve our child and youth safe policies, procedures and practices where relevant.

3.10 Identifying, Responding to, and Reporting Harm and Risk of Harm

- 3.10.1 Safeguarding children and young people is the responsibility of all RHL staff.
- 3.10.2 All children and young people have a right to feel safe, and to be safe at all times. RHL does not tolerate any abuse or neglect of children or young people involved with our services.
- 3.10.3 RHL staff must ensure the best interests of children and young people are paramount when responding to, and reporting concerns about, their safety and wellbeing.
- 3.10.4 The prevention, identification and reporting of suspected or actual abuse to, or neglect of, children and young people is an integral part of a child and youth safe organisation (**refer QP/OP 1029 Preventing and Responding to Alleged Abuse of Vulnerable Persons Policy and Procedure; QP 2012 Notifications Policy**).

3.11 Documenting Policies and Procedures

- 3.11.1 All organisational documents, including this Policy and all documents referred to within this Policy, are made available to employees and volunteers through the use of a web-based quality management system which is easily accessible via a web browser.
- 3.11.2 RHL monitors the implementation and understanding of policies and procedures relating to child safety and wellbeing through internal training which is completed at induction and on a cyclical basis in line with the priority of the training and the person's role.
- 3.11.3 RHL will engage children and young people, families and the community where possible to obtain their feedback on their awareness of and confidence in RHL's child safety and wellbeing policy and initiatives.

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4.0 OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

Internal documents

QP 2002: Code of Conduct Policy
OP 2002: Code of Conduct Procedure
QP 9015: Risk Management Policy
QP 1003: Complaints and Appeals Policy
OP 1003: Complaints and Appeals Procedure
QP 9004: Accidents and Incident Reporting Policy
OP 9004: Accidents and Incident Reporting Procedure
QP 2010: Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
OP 2010: Privacy and Confidentiality Procedure
QP 5001: Record Collection and Storage Policy
OP 5001: Record Collection and Storage Procedure
QP 2012: Notification Policy
QP 6004: Recruitment and Selection Policy
OP 6004: Recruitment and Selection Procedure
QP 6009: Professional Development and Review Policy
QP 1001: Access and Equity Policy
OP 1001: Access and Equity Procedure
QP 6016: Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy
OP 6016: Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Procedure
RHL Schedule of Delegations
Child Safety Code of Conduct
Code of Conduct Agreement
Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy
Child and Youth Risk Management Plan
Operational Risk Register
RHL Privacy Policy
Privacy Policy Summary
Door42 Operational Plan
Employee Induction Manual
Tenant handbook
Door42 resident handbook

External documents

Child Protection Act 1999
Human Rights Act 2019
Privacy Act 1988
National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
QCOSS Cultural Awareness Training